

BOOK Magazine

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Caste or Outcast?

By HENRY WELLINGTON WACK, F. R. G. S.

Associate Camp Director, THE RED BOOK MAGAZINE

ALL boys and girls have that birthright, the ambition to succeed. But the capacity to succeed is not an inevitable inheritance. It must be acquired by all through educational opportunity. Thus only may youth be master of its own destiny. The initiative must always reside in the will to achieve.

Emerson said: "No one can cheat you out of ultimate success except yourself." This means that boys and girls must prepare their minds and bodies not only to resist the impact of untoward circumstances; but to embrace opportunity when, by the force of their powers, they find or create it. Opportunity does not serve the incompetent, who cannot ride it to success. Opportunity is a steed from which many fall and get hurt because they had not learned to stick fast and ride hard. They were unprepared at that critical moment when Opportunity came and Success called.

David Starr Jordan once said: "The young man's first duty is towards his after-self. So live that your after-self, the man you ought to be, may be possible and actual * * * * Will you let him come, taking your place, gaining through your experiences, your joys, building on them as his own? Or will you wantonly fling it all away, careless that the man you might have been shall never be?"

The Hindoos are a people of universal religious spirit, belief and customs. One is either born within or without the fold of their ancient faith, a being of caste or a being outcast.

Life has a similar aspect. We are either of it with all our powers on the high sea of successful endeavor, or we are drifting and churning in its backwaters and eddies—going nowhere. Going nowhere is the most wasteful and costly journey in the world!

The qualified Private School and Summer Camp are the best places in which to discover one's aptitudes. There boys and girls come upon self-understanding in the wake of inspirational leadership. There they train their faculties to meet life's sudden surprises, to develop perception and power and purpose.

The very process of teaching and learning and training in our cultural camps is a happiness that elates the spirit and fires the body with a sense of vital well-being. That glorious impulse of a bounding health that comes from *intelligent life in the open* overwhelms the petty pricks and pains of daily life and gilds its years with genuine joy and happiness. Camp trained boys and girls are more intelligent, more resourceful, more skilled in the arts of recreation and leisure, sturdier in character and abler to serve others than untrained boys and girls.

That great educator, Horace Mann, long ago said: "A generation modifies the character of its children far more than it does its own." It is what we do with our children here and now that will determine their character and force in adult life. Shall they have the quality and privilege of caste or the defects and limitations of the outcast? Shall they be liberally trained and educated in both school and camp to equip them for success when it calls? Or will you pitifully stunt them by omitting to insure their camp training in what has been called the new school of natural teaching? Every parent and every child is vitally interested in that decision. The boys and girls of this generation are in the midst of problems which have never before beset the world. If they are to solve these problems they must have a balanced educational opportunity—a cultural camp training as much as a liberal school education.

There are no errors so irreparable as parental errors in raising the children of the nation—the men and women of tomorrow, who will either succeed or fail because of what we do with and for them today.

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I first heard of Pelmanism while in England on war work. Sooner or later almost every conversation touched on it, for the movement seemed to have the sweep of a religious conviction. Men and women of every class and circumstance were acclaiming it as a new departure in mental training that gave promise of ending that *preventable* inefficiency which acts as a brake on human progress. Even in France I did not escape the word, for thousands of officers and men were *Pelmanizing* in order to fit themselves for return to civil life.

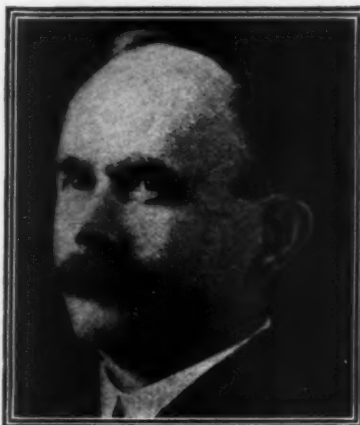
When I learned that Pelmanism had been brought to America, by Americans for Americans, I was among the first to enroll. My reasons were two: first, because I have always felt that every mind needed regular, systematic and scientific exercise, and, secondly, because I wanted to find out if Pelmanism was the thing that I could recommend to the hundreds who continually ask my advice in relation to their lives, problems and ambitions.

Failure is a sad word in any language, but it is peculiarly tragic here in America, where institutions and resources join to put success within the reach of every individual. In the twenty years that I have sat on the bench of the Juvenile Court of Denver, almost every variety of human failure has passed before me in melancholy procession. By *failure* I do not mean the merely criminal mistakes of the individual but the faults of training that keep a life from full development and complete expression.

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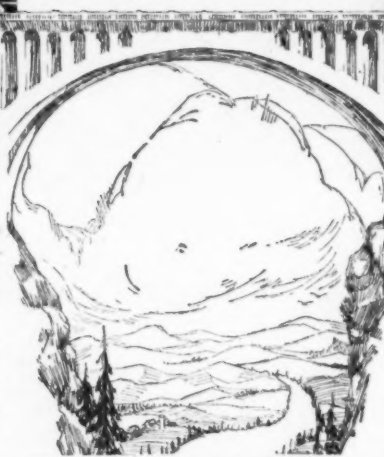
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Suppose it were your privilege every day to sit in conference with the head of your firm. Suppose every day he were to lay before you in systematic order the various problems he is compelled to solve, and were to explain to you the principles by which he

solves them. Suppose that one by one you were to *work those problems out*—returning to him every day for counsel and assistance—

Granted that privilege, surely your advancement would be faster—*by far*—than that of the man who is compelled to pick up experience hit-or-miss.

Under the LaSalle Problem Method you pursue, to all intents and purposes, that identical plan. You advance by *solving problems*.

Only—instead of having at your command the counsel of a single individual—your Chief—you have back of you the organized experience of the largest business training institution in the world, the authoritative findings of scores of able specialists, the actual procedure of the most successful business houses in America.

Thus—instead of fumbling and blundering and maybe losing a job now and then, you are *coached* in the solving of the very problems you must face in the higher positions. Step by step, you work them out for yourself—until, at the conclusion of your training in a given branch of business, you have at your fingertips the *kind* of experience that men are willing and glad to pay real money for.

Send for Salary-Doubling Plan

If you are in earnest when you say that you want to get ahead, you will not be content until you put this kind of training to the test—exchange it, just as thousands have done, for a bigger income.

The details of the LaSalle Problem Method—often spoken of as the *salary-doubling plan*—will be sent you for the asking. Whether you adopt the plan or not, the basic information it will place in your hands, without cost, is of very real and definite value. And it's FREE.

Balance the two minutes that it takes to fill out the coupon against the rewards of a successful career—then clip and mail the coupon NOW.

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The World's Largest Business Training Institution

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Dept. 266-R

Chicago

I shall be glad to have details of your salary-doubling plan, together with complete information regarding the opportunities in the business field I have checked below. Also a copy of "Ten Years' Promotion in One," all without obligation.

☐ **Business Management:** Training for Official, Managerial, Sales and Departmental Executive positions.

☐ **Modern Salesmanship:** Training for position as Sales Executive, Salesman, Sales Coach or Trainer, Sales Promotion Manager, Manufacturer's Agent, Solicitor, and all positions in retail, wholesale, or specialty selling.

☐ **Higher Accountancy:** Training for position as Auditor, Comptroller, Certified Public Accountant, Cost Accountant, etc.

☐ **Law:** Training for Bar; LL. B. Degree

☐ **Commercial Law:** Reading, Reference and Consultation Service for Business Men.

☐ **Traffic Management—Foreign and Domestic:** Training for position as Railroad or Industrial Traffic Manager, Rate Expert, Freight Solicitor, etc.

☐ **Railway Station Management:** Training for position of Station Accountant, Cashier and Agent, Division Agent, etc.

☐ **Banking and Finance:** Training for executive positions in Banks and Financial Institutions.

☐ **Modern Foremanship and Production Methods:** Training for positions in Shop Management, such as that of Superintendent, General Foreman, Foreman, Sub-Foreman, etc.

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☐ **Personnel and Employment Management:** Training in the position of Personnel Manager, Industrial Relations Manager, Employment Manager, and positions relating to Employee Service.

☐ **Modern Business Correspondence and Practice:** Training for position as Sales or Collection Correspondent, Sales Promotion Manager, Mail Sales Manager, Secretary, etc.

☐ **Expert Bookkeeping:** Training for position as Head Bookkeeper.

☐ **Business English:** Training for Business Correspondents and Copy Writers.

☐ **Commercial Spanish:** Training for position as Foreign Correspondent with Spanish-speaking countries.

☐ **Effective Speaking:** Training in the art of forceful, effective speech, for Ministers, Salesmen, Fraternal Leaders, Politicians, Clubmen, etc.

☐ **C. P. A. Coaching for Advanced Accountants.**



Name..... Present Position..... Address.....

ASK DAD - HE KNOWS!

ONE SUN that has never set!

By Irvin S. Cobb

OVER at the factory they told me that the sales of Sweet Caporal Cigarettes had been mounting up steadily here of late. There was no unusual stimulation in the way of a special advertising campaign. But sales had grown larger and still larger. They are growing while you are reading this. More Sweet Caporals are being sold today than were sold yesterday, more will be sold tomorrow than were sold today.

This condition applies to the re-



tailers all over the United States. According to expert opinion there can be but one explanation to account for so spontaneous and unforced a groundswell in the demand for a brand which has been a standard and a staple for forty-seven years.

The answer is that an increasing number of cigarette smokers in America are turning to the crusty natural blend that suited their fathers and their grandfathers who bought Sweet Caporal Cigarettes before them, a blend of selected Virginia tobacco, made into cigarettes by a process which has never been changed, with the purest of Vermont maple sugar for its savoring, and positively nothing else.

Perhaps you have noticed that part of

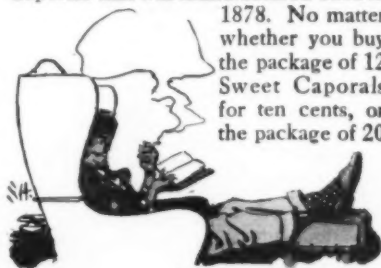
ask Grandad - he knows too!

The best smokes he ever had were "Sweet Caps"

Guaranteed by
The American Tobacco Co.

the trademark of Sweet Caporals is a blazing sun. That trademark is historic. It appeared on the first package of Sweet Caporals that was manufactured back in

1878. No matter whether you buy the package of 12 Sweet Caporals for ten cents, or the package of 20



Sweet Caporal for fifteen cents, you'll find that same ancient and honorable device upon it. Here is one sun that has never set or sunk in forty-seven years and is rising higher now than it ever rose before. You can't get away from an argument that speaks for itself.

Sweet Caporal, to my way of thinking, is that kind of cigarette. It speaks for itself. And it's speaking louder all the time.

Thank you.

Irvin S. Cobb

P. S. — I write an article like this every once in a while. Watch for the next. I have declined propositions to turn out advertisements for various manufactured articles because I feel I surely would be a hired hand, exploiting this, that or the other thing for so much a word. But I reached for this opportunity. I knew I could put my heart in it—could with sincerity endorse the article I was praising.



KATHARINE CORNELL
in *"The Green Hat"*

Photograph by Edward Thayer Monroe, New York



ANN HARDING
in "Stolen Fruit"

Photograph by Hall Stearns, New York



NITA NALDI
Film Star

Photograph by Edward Thayer Monroe, New York



IRENE DELROY
in "*Greenwich Village Follies*"

Photograph by Ailred Cheney Johnston, New York

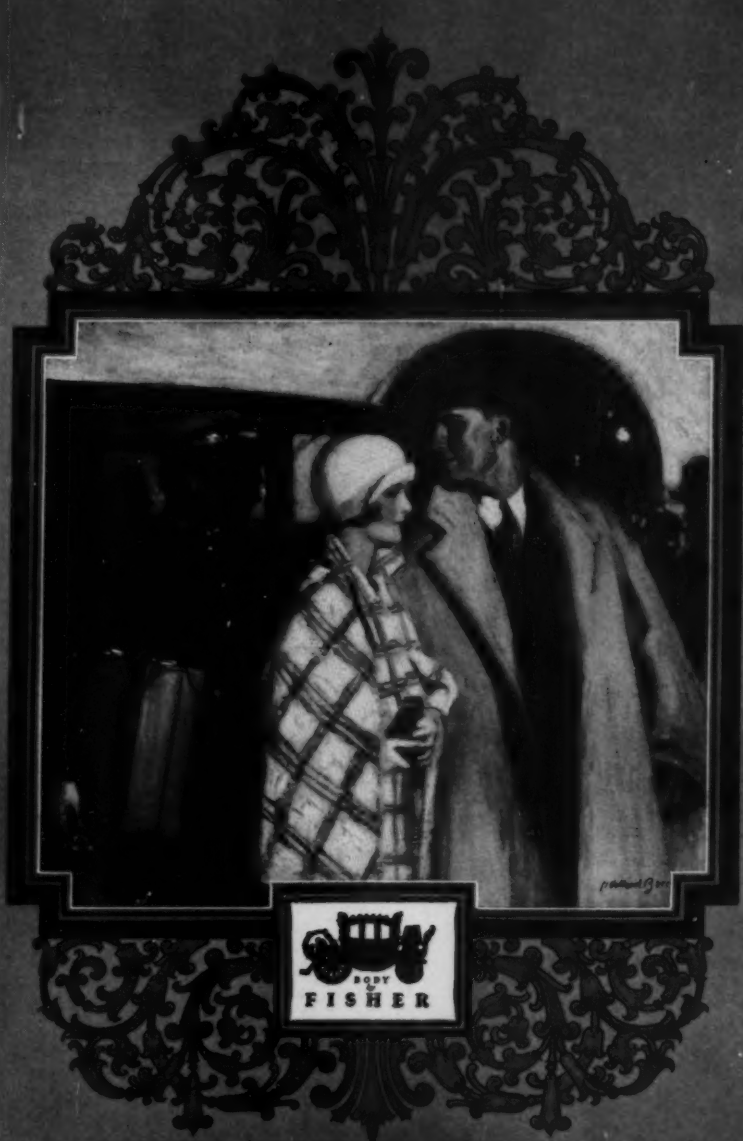


LOUISE MELE
in "Mercenary Mary"
Photograph by White Studio, New York



VIRGINIA MAGEE
in "Ziegfeld Follies"

Photograph by Ira D. Schwarz, New York



FISHER BODIES

FISHER is an organization of specialists.

More than one hundred skilled trades reach their highest development in its service. Within it are found all the varied contrasts of industry.



The sheet-metal worker, at his giant toggle press, stamps out steel panels under thousands of pounds pressure. The skilled silver worker, with his delicate instruments, works out fine fittings for luxurious bodies.

In the forests of the southern and the northern states, Fisher lumber-jacks fell selected trees, which mill workers make into lumber for Fisher bodies.

In southern Illinois, where tremendous glaciers in ages past crushed the solid rock to fine, white silica sand, Fisher glass workers, in the most modern glass plants in the world, make the genuine plate glass used in Fisher bodies.



Textile workers, upholsterers, painters, enamelers—the most skilled craftsmen in these and a multitude of other trades are called to the task of making Fisher bodies finer and better.

The work of all these expert workers is constantly checked by a veritable army of carefully trained inspectors who subject every phase of production in a Fisher body to closest and most critical scrutiny.

It is a fact, that workmen in these more than a hundred trades work to such high standards that they have formed the habit of excellence in their work—a fact which in major degree accounts for the finer attributes of bodies by Fisher.

The Law ^{By} Angelo Patri

Decoration by
Franklin Booth

THIS is a lament and a beseechment. I am troubled by the thought of those who want to do something about everything. I am worried by their insistent desire to "make a law." If we continue to pass laws in the vain attempt to level the life of a people to the same plane, the oldest inhabitant will soon lose his way in this erstwhile familiar, rut-worn world.

"The girls' dresses are altogether too short, too wispy, too daring. Let's form a society, and denounce the folly of this generation. Let's pass a law."

As if the girls' dresses had not, from the beginning of time, been the inspiration of poets, a lure for lovers, a thrill for artists, and the knowing delight of the girls. It is not the girls who make their dresses. Time and men's memories and dreams, do that. What sort of law probes those depths?

"The boys are going too fast. They go up and down the earth in speeding cars and ships. There ought to be a law to keep them in their places."

What sense in that? Youth rushes the world forward. Youth dares and does, while age and experience sit back weighing reasons and consequences, doing nothing save passing laws against doing something. Life stops for no law of man. Strange that the centuries have not taught him that!

The talk and the spirit of all this troubles me. You cannot legislate goodness, and there is no need if you could. Righteousness precedes the law. Goodness was inspired so long ago and so perfectly that all we of earth need do is seek and follow it. Which is saying that most laws are unnecessary. Is that not true to you? Did you ever know anyone to succeed in making a silk purse of anything save the silk originally intended for the purpose?

The laws that will abide were fashioned when the foundations of the sea were laid. They are so perfect and so plain that the wayfaring man, even though a fool, may not err therein. Let us alone.



The Young Grandfather

By Strickland Gillilan

Decoration by E.R. & V.T. Kirkbride



It is not true. There's some mistake somewhere.

They placed a baby in my arms just now—
A white-swathed bit of flesh with fuzz for hair,
With fire-red face whence comes a fretful row—
And said: "This is your grandchild!" Mine! Get that?
Why, all grandfathers that I used to know
Were ancient men, hung o'er with flabby fat,
Or toothless dodderers with motions slow!

I am not old; I have not doddered yet.

My life, with all I'd be, still lies ahead
The same as in the days when she—my pet
Who lies so still there in her snowy bed,
Whence came the nurse who handed me the child—
Was red and tiny like this bundle here!
What magic has two full decades beguiled
Until they seem scarce longer than a year?

Thus I, young-hearted as I've ever been,

Still praying I may some day find success,
Gaze stupidly, with dazed and doubting grin,
At this new infant in its long white dress,
And know the thing they're saying is untrue.
I have no "grandchild"—no! It is not fair
To name me such before my youth is through.
It cannot be. There's something wrong somewhere.



LES POUDRES COTY

*In the subtle enhancement of
beauty, it is only a powder of
superlative quality which gives ever
fresh, clear loveliness through
month after month of constant use.
For their delicate perfection which
never varies, the Face Powders of
COTY are daily used by
millions of women
throughout the
world.*



THE DISTINCTIVE SHADES OF COTY FACE
POWDER ARE OBTAINABLE IN THE COMPACTE
AND ALSO IN THE COMPACTE REFILLS

Address "Dept. R. B. 2"

"THE Finesse OF PERFUME"
A new booklet of Coty creations,
interesting to all women - on request

COTY INC.
714 Fifth Avenue, New York
CANADA - 55 McGill College Ave., Montreal

Nature's Gift to Beauty

is embodied in this gentle, daily care that has brought the charm of natural loveliness to millions

COCONUT PALM TREE



AFRICAN PALM TREE



OLIVE TREE



Soap from Trees

The only oils in Palmolive Soap are the priceless beauty oils from these three trees—pictured above—and no other fats whatsoever.

That is why Palmolive Soap is the natural color that it is—for palm and olive oils, nothing else, give Palmolive its green color.

THE art of being beautiful today is simply the secret of keeping *natural* beauty.

Women have learned that gentle, common-sense care is far more potent than the most involved of beauty methods. For Youth is thus retained.

Keeping the skin clean is the secret. Doing this with pure soap . . . with soap made for **ONE** purpose only, to safeguard good complexions . . . is the *important* part to remember.

So, more and more, thousands turn to Palmolive . . . a soap that is kind to the skin, a soap made with beautiful complexions always in mind.

The rule to follow if guarding a good complexion is your goal

Wash your face with soothing Palmolive. Massage it gently into the skin. Rinse thoroughly. Then repeat both the washing and rinsing. Let the final rinsing be with cold water. If your skin is inclined to

dryness, apply a touch of good cold cream—that is all. Do this regularly, and particularly before retiring.

Use powder and rouge if you wish. But never leave them on over night. If you do, they clog the pores, often enlarge them. Blackheads and disfigurements often follow. They must be washed away.

Sallow, unattractive skin no longer excusable

Thus in a simple manner, millions since the days of Cleopatra have found beauty and charm.

No medicaments are necessary. Just remove the day's accumulations of dirt, oil and perspiration, cleanse the pores, and nature will be kind to you. Your skin will be of fine texture. Your color will be good. Wrinkles will not be the problem as the years advance.

Avoid this mistake

Do not use ordinary soaps in the treatment given above. Do not think any green soap, or represented as of palm and olive oils, is the same as Palmolive.

And it costs but 10c the cake! Obtain a cake today. Note the difference just one week makes.



Palmolive Soap is untouched by human hands until you break the wrapper—it is never sold unwrapped

THE PALMOLIVE COMPANY (Del. Corp.), CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

A COMMON-SENSE EDITORIAL

By BRUCE BARTON

The New Idea

IN the little New England college which I attended there was a kindly professor who had been a preacher in his youth. Because he held some views that were not in keeping with the strict letter of the creeds, he became the center of a violent controversy. You would think, to read the reports of his trial for "heresy," that he was some sort of social assassin—a menace to the race.

And here he was at sixty, with gray whiskers and soft eyes, the trusted friend and adviser to another generation.

He was welcomed in the very churches that had cast him out, and when he died, the papers that had criticized him most severely were filled with kindly comment.

I used to look at him and think: "You are history. Your own life is a brief synopsis of what has been going on always in the world. Every new idea has had to be crucified before it could be worshiped. Men's greatest enemies are their own closed minds."

The man who invented the railroad time-table died not long ago in England. For years he carried his invention about from the office of one railroad company

to another, only to be met with continual rebuffs.

"Why should we make ourselves trouble by putting out a thing like that?" the railroad heads demanded. "People would expect our trains to be on time, and when they were late, we should be criticized for it. The thing is entirely impracticable."

He lived to see his invention triumph, just as Huxley, the great scientist, lived long enough to be received with honor at Oxford, where he had been so bitterly denounced.

He wrote to his friend Hooker: "It was queer to sit there and hear doctrines you and I were damned for thirty-four years ago enunciated as matters of course, disputed by no reasonable man."

Huxley was a rather handsome man, and it would be a good thing if his picture were hung in modern business offices in place of some of the efficiency mottoes that now adorn the walls. It would be a reminder that the one greatest foe to efficiency is the mind that knows it all, and that no office can afford to turn away from its doors the Youth with the new idea.

Whole wheat at its best!



Write today for Free Sample package of Wheatena and a book of recipes showing many dainty and economical ways in which Wheatena may be served. The Wheatena Company, Wheatena-ville, Rahway, N. J.

TEMPTING golden Wheatena! Each delicious spoonful fairly laden with the sunny strength of the wheatfields!

Millions delight in its hearty whole-wheat flavor. Watch the children's eyes brighten when they see brimming bowls of Wheatena on the breakfast table. They just "eat it up" and ask for more and more. Give them all they want—it is so good for them and so easy to digest.

Wheatena is whole wheat at its

best. Only plump, golden grains of choicest winter wheat are selected, then roasted and toasted by the exclusive Wheatena method. All the flavor and nourishment are retained—the *real* golden heart of the wheat—the minerals—the carbohydrates—the proteins and the *bran*—nature's safe regulator. All the elements you need to build bone, muscle, tissue and to add golden years to your life.

Get Wheatena today—treat your family at breakfast tomorrow.

On your table in three minutes, at less than 2 cents a pound

The RED BOOK Magazine

February 1926 • Volume XLVI • Number 4

KARL EDWIN HARRIMAN, *Editor*

EDGAR SISSON, *Associate Editor*

A vivid Romance of Chicago and New York

Tides

By *Julian Street*

Illustrated by
C. D. Williams

"I'm sure you've had
enough by now," Miss
Wheelock said.
"Please come down."



Here begins a really great novel—a work that the editors of this magazine believe one of the most distinguished that the year 1926 is likely to bring forth. In it the author is concerned with the tides of human life that sweep an American family from Chicago, its place of origin, on to the East, and back again.


HAVING passed smartly through the early afternoon traffic of La Salle Street, with the sunlight spinning on the spokes of its red wheels, a runabout drawn by a bay pacer swathed to the ears in a fly-net of knotted cord, drew up before an office building typical of the city and of the time, its four stories marked by bulky cornices jutting from a flat façade, stippled, like all other structures of the business district, with Chicago soot.

A basement office, one step below the level of the street, was now partially shaded from the August sun by a flight of perforated iron steps leading upward from the sidewalk to the main floor, the front of which, evidently remodeled, exhibited, in place of the usual row of windows, a mammoth sheet of plate glass, toward which, as the vehicle stopped, the negro driver, and a sharpish gray-clad man who sat beside him, simultaneously raised their eyes. From their position it was, however, impossible to see beyond the surface of the window, upon which the sun, high in the heavens, fell at such an angle as to turn to blinding flame the elaborate gold letters of the sign it bore: "W. J. SHIRE & CO.—REAL ESTATE—INSURANCE."

"De boss say he watch foh us," remarked the negro. "Ah reckon he be right out, Mist' Holden."

The other nodded vaguely. He was no longer looking at the window but at a comely young woman who had appeared around the near-by corner and was tripping toward them in a costume charmingly unsuited to the commercial aspect

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"I'm afraid it's my fault, Luke," said Miss Wheelock. "The political side never occurred to me."

of the street. Her gown of bright flowered mull, edged with cream lace, might have been worn at a garden party or to the races at Washington Park track; the draped skirt, fashionably full, barely cleared the flagstones, but the waist, a basque, was snugly adjusted to the vaselike curves of a pretty figure. The tip of a pale blue ostrich plume, depending from a hat of soft straw, brightened the gold of the young woman's hair, and the brim of the hat, caught up at the side, lent to her face an accent of coquettishness.

Nearing the runabout, she glanced up and after a swift scrutiny of Holden, addressed the negro:

"Is my father in his office, Ed?"

"Yes'm, Miss Flo'nce, we waitin' foh him." He smiled, showing his white teeth as he saluted her.

"Guess I'm just in time, then." Again she let her eyes meet Holden's, and his feeling that she had in reality spoken to him was so definite that, half involuntarily, he raised his hand to his hat. Apparently she did not observe the gesture, but ascended the iron steps, lifting her long skirts daintily, while Holden, looking after her, reflected that a bustle, properly worn, could impart to the female figure in motion, a swanlike grace highly gratifying to the eye.

"If that's Mr. Shire's daughter," he said to the colored man, "I suppose it means we wait."

"No suh, Ah don' reckon so. Miss Flo'nce she mos' in-gen'ally come git money from huh paw an' go right off an' spen' it."

Holden sat in silence for a brief period, during which he glanced occasionally at the doorway through which Miss Shire had passed.

"Well," he said presently, moving restlessly in the seat, "he doesn't seem to be coming out." And a moment later: "It's pretty hot out here; I'll wait inside." Whereupon he alighted from the runabout, mounted the steps, entered a door on the

plate-glass panel of which the elaborate golden sign of the Shire firm again appeared, and found himself in a fenced enclosure beyond which clerks were at work.

At the front of the office, on a platform, a heavy man, back-tilted in a swivel chair before a roll-top desk, was silhouetted against the spacious window, a high-light gleaming on the bald dome of his head above the fringe of reddish-brown hair. Beside his desk two men were standing, and as he spoke to them Holden heard distinctly what he said.

"I don't like mud-slinging any better than the next fellow," he loudly proclaimed, "but the Democrats started it with their lies about Blaine, and our Party's got a right to retaliate. This story ought to ruin Cleveland with the church element." He rose, lifting himself by the arms of the chair, and moving with his departing visitors toward the gate in the fence, continued:

"Far as campaign contributions go, gentlemen, I'll simply say that you can count on W. J. Shire & Co. to subscribe as much as any other real-estate firm in Chicago, and maybe a little more. That ought to satisfy you." He looked from one to the other inquiringly, but with assurance.

"It certainly does. Thanks, Mr. Shire."

UNCLE TOM'S CABIN



"Nothing to thank me for." He stepped down from the platform, opened the gate in the low partition, and as they left invited Holden in.

"Glad to see you, Holden, glad to see you." He shook hands vigorously and drew him toward the desk near which Miss Shire had been waiting in a chair.

"Let me make you acquainted with my daughter Florence," he went on; and to her: "Mr. Luke Holden—lives out in Oakland."

"Oh, Oakland," she said, giving him her hand. "How nice!"

"You've seen Mr. Holden's house," her father told her. "I pointed it out to you and Mamma when we were driving—told you a friend of mine lived there—red brick house and a lady and a little girl picking flowers. I remember you remarking the garden looked kind of old-fashioned, and—"

"But I thought it was right pretty, though," hastily interjected the young woman, as if the term "old-fashioned" held out for her a connotation of reproach.

"My wife's from New England," Holden explained. "It's the kind of garden they used to have back there. She calls it old-fashioned herself. I tell her it looks countrified. But she wants it, so let her have it."

"Well, of course—" Miss Shire's suspended tone told him she agreed with him.

"You wont have a garden there forever, Holden," Shire put in. "The way this city's growing and taxes going up, property's going to get too valuable to waste land that way. You'll be selling off that strip."

But Holden shook his head.

"No," he said, "I guess it's got to be a garden always. At any rate it'll have to be one as long as the Wheelocks live next door."

"Old Zenas Wheelock?"

"Yes—you know him?"

"I've seen him. What's he got to do with your garden?"

"He sold me the land off his own place. Nannie—Mrs. Holden—was crazy for a garden, and that strip of his land, to the south of our house, was the only place to put it. He thinks the world of her, so he let me have it."

"Maybe he didn't lose much on the deal at that," suggested Shire with a cynical wink of his red-brown eye.

"I paid him what it cost him."

"Well, property values out that way haven't changed much until the last few years. Guess it didn't hurt him much it he had plenty of land."

"Being a pioneer," said Holden, "he wants more room around him than most of us do. He didn't want to sell, but—"

"That's what they all say."

"Well, he didn't want to. But he knew my wife's people back in New Hampshire when he was a boy—says her grandfather did his folks some favor or other—and Nannie and his daughter Martha went to school together; they're great friends."

"Must cost you a pretty penny keeping up such a garden," said Shire.

"Yes, with wages getting so high. Takes all of one man's time, and I've had to raise him to twenty-four dollars a month."

"Board him?"

"Yes, he eats with the hired girls and has a room in the barn."

"Well, you mark my words," said the real-estate man, "when Oakland goes a-booming, like she's going to, you folks that have got more land than you need will be selling it off, same as happened farther downtown. When the vacant lots are taken up you'll sell that garden, and your neighbor, Mr. Wheelock, will sell off his side yard. That's what always happens. It's the way cities build up."

HOLDEN shook his head and was about to speak when Miss Shire, who, frankly bored by their conversation, had been glancing idly about the office, broke in.

"We live on the West Side," she said, fixing Holden with a bright look, "and Mamma and I just hate it over there. We've been telling Pappa all along that nobody nice lives on the West Side any more. It's unfashionable. I wish you'd talk him into moving to Oakland."

"I'll try," he answered, smiling.

"Holden and I are starting out there right now, to look around a bit," her father informed her, "so if you've got anything on your mind, young lady, you'd better hurry up with it." He spoke indulgently.

"If I'm in the way—" Holden began, but Shire cut him off with the assurance that he was not.

"I know what Florence wants when she comes to the office," he declared with a grin. "I certainly ought to by this time." And turning to her he thrust his hand into the horizontal opening of his trousers pocket, asking: "Well, daughter, how much this time?"

The young woman did not answer, but smiled at him confidently, her green eyes gleaming; whereupon her father, with an exaggerated sigh that was clearly intended to be playful, drew out a roll of bills and stripping several of them off, laid them in her outstretched palm.

"Will that be enough?"

She did not move or speak, but stood smiling at the banknotes in her hand until he placed another bill there, when, with a casual "Thanks, Pappa," she leaned over, reached beneath her draped overskirt and took from a concealed pocket a small purse into which she tucked the money.

"Be sure to show him some nice lots in Oakland, Mr. Holden," she said, bending over to replace the purse in the mysterious pocket. "I wish we lived there."

"I wish so, too," Holden replied with unwonted gallantry; whereupon Miss Shire, bending, hand in pocket, turned her head and from beneath her hat-brim shot him a glance so bright that the memory of it remained with him stimulatingly after she was gone.

"Phew!" exclaimed the real-estate man as, presently, having emerged from the office, he and Holden took their places in the red-wheeled runabout. "If I'd known it was going to get so hot, I'd of sent Ed for you with the top-buggy." He looked reproachfully at the colored man who was standing at the mare's head, and before taking up the reins removed the square-crowned derby hat which was his invariable headgear, and mopped his brow and neck with a large silk handkerchief.

"Oh, it's not so bad," returned Holden, but as he spoke he edged away from the side of the larger man, who simultaneously provided more room in the narrow body of the vehicle by placing one foot on the painted step, outside.

"You slim folks never feel the heat so much," said Shire enviously as he headed the mare southward.

Holden had a thought of suggesting to his companion that a hat of soft Mackinaw straw like his own, and a suit of some material lighter than Shire's customary black diagonal, would make him more comfortable, but sensing that these habiliments were worn by the real-estate man as a sort of uniform, intended to denote dignity and conservatism, he said nothing.

AT Adams Street they swung eastward toward Lake Michigan, Shire guiding the responsive animal skillfully down the middle of the way, passing drays and delivery wagons at a pace which kept the runabout rattling and bouncing as its steel tires rolled over the uneven Belgian blocks.

Across the brown-columned front of the Palmer House hung a huge campaign banner of netting and canvas, adorned with crudely painted likenesses of Blaine and Logan.

"They're as good as elected now," Shire remarked, gazing with approval at the banner, and he turned with a look of surprise when Holden answered:

"I hope not."

"What?"

"I'm for Cleveland."

"You are? You were a Garfield man in 1880."

"That was four years ago."

"Mean to say you've turned Mugwump?"

"Yes, if that's the only name you red-hot party men know for an independent voter. I'm the only Cleveland man on our block. You needn't hesitate to buy property there. Except for me it's quite respectable." He spoke dryly, and Shire, perceiving his irritation, changed the subject.

"Nothing shows the growth of a city like hotels," he declared expansively, "and this city's moving ahead fast in that respect. Bemis tells me the Rishaloo is going to be as elegant as anything in New York City, and there's talk of erecting a combined hotel and opera house at Michigan and Congress that'll be the largest in the world."

"I don't believe Potter Palmer will ever let the Palmer House drop behind," returned Holden, cooperating with the other's evident conciliatory purpose.

Shire agreed. "Palmer's a smart man," he said. "There's two things in Chicago that every countryman has to see: the Stockyards and the silver dollars in the floor of the Palmer House barber-shop. Funny about those dollars. There's not so many of them—couple of hundred, I guess—price of a horse. I understand they're split in half, too. But being in the floor, everybody has to go and look at them."

At the end of Adams Street they turned up Michigan Avenue, a wide thoroughfare now half-shaded by a phalanx of smoke-grimed business buildings, four to six stories high, facing, like the wall of some desert city, the open tract known as the Lake Front, where, on a floor of cinders and shaggy grass, from which the heat rose in trembling waves, groups of young men were playing baseball, backed by a frieze of freight-trains which concealed Lake Michigan. But the Lake, although unseen, made its presence felt, not by cooling breezes, but by a cruel augmented light, hanging hot and metallic in the vast sweep of the sky.

"Dan Burnham wants to tear down the Exposition Building and turn the whole Lake Front into a fancy park," Shire informed his companion. "Wants to grade it up so as to hide the railroad. He's a good architect, but I never saw an architect yet that was practical. What's the matter with Michigan Avenue just the way it is? Seems to me it's as fine a street as anybody'd care to see."

THEY had passed the Leland Hotel with its file of hansoms and four-wheelers, and were now at the beginning of a residence district composed of simple, spacious houses, some of them in blocks, some detached, each with a flat rectangular façade of cream-colored Joliet stone, behind a bit of well-kept lawn separated from the street by a cast-iron fence.

Shire and Holden knew many of the citizens to whom these houses belonged, and discussed them as they drove—Mr. Munn, Judge Freer, Mr. Blackstone—and indeed the houses were of a character to inform a stranger unfamiliar with these names, that they were the residences of men prominent in the city's life. Such a stranger, out of his imagination and his experience of other American cities, might even have peopled the houses, assigning to each, as proprietor, a quiet, bearded man having a good library, a good pair of horses, a good wife and good children.

Without being crowded, the street was lively with a traffic consisting chiefly of buggies, runabouts and surreys, and occasionally a touch of style was given to one or the other of these vehicles by a spotted coach-dog following at a brisk trot beneath the rear axle. Before the two men reached the end of the Lake Front a sulky with high wooden wheels overtook and passed them, and Shire, having virtuously held in his mare, was pleased when a park policeman, riding a dappled gray, stopped the other driver and cautioned him. Now and then a bright colored trap or dog-cart with nickel-plated lamps passed by, or again a spider-phæton



"Well, daughter, how much this time?"
And her father, with a playful sigh,
drew out a roll of bills.

like a wheeled basket of shining patent-leather, or, most spectacular of all, a victoria, announced by pompous hoof-beats and the jingling of silver chains, with a liveried coachman driving stiffly, and a lacy lady on the seat behind, reclining luxuriously beneath her fluffy parasol.

Above Twelfth Street the houses exhibited architectural styles newer and more ornate; some were of brick with stone trim, others of colored stone, with gabled roofs, pointed towers, turrets, bulging bay windows and massive *portes-cochères*. For the larger and more elaborate houses Shire expressed admiration, and repeatedly he told Holden that this property, or that, had been sold through his firm, or called attention to the blue and yellow signs of W. J. Shire & Co. on lots or houses for sale or for rent.

"Michigan Avenue's got the start," he declared. "It'll always be our finest residence street, with Grand Boulevard and Drexel next as the city grows south. And it's bound to grow south on account of the superior transportation."

At Twenty-second Street, where they crossed the car-tracks, he spoke again of South Side transportation.

"Now that they've got the cable-cars out Cottage Grove Avenue to Oakland," he declared, "the district will build up in a hurry. People tell me I have the name of being a pretty smart real-estate man, and if I *am* smart, then you folks in Oakland live in a mighty good part of this city."

"Glad to hear you say so."

"If I didn't think so," Shire continued, "I wouldn't be here right now. I want to familiarize myself with Oakland because I

believe in it. There's something more to the real-estate business, as I see it, than just the money. If it was only money I wanted, I'd stick to the downtown end of it, but there's things besides money in this world. I'm proud of Chicago. And I'm proud of the share that the firm of W. J. Shire & Co. has had in its development. People don't realize, even yet, what a city we've got here. They *think* they realize it, but they don't. The census of 1880 gave us five hundred thousand population. Personally I'm convinced we had more, but let it go at five hundred thousand. Well, now, just four years later, what do you think we have?"

"Six hundred thousand?"

"No sir. Nearer three-quarters of a million. I'd bet two to one Chicago's bigger than Brooklyn right now if it wasn't for the boom in Brooklyn since the opening of the Bridge last May. Let me tell you, Holden— Whoa, Roberta! Whoa, girl!" He drew the reins taut and touched the mare's back with the whip, for she had shied and broken, startled by the sudden appearance from around a corner of several tall nickel-plated bicycles ridden by young men in black tights and tiny cloth caps, who blew lustily on two-toned whistles as, balanced precariously on their high-perched seats, they leaned at the turn.

"Darn chumps!" Shire exclaimed. "Imagine riding those things on a day like this!"

"Imagine riding them at all," said Holden. "At the least little bump, up comes the hind wheel and over you go on your nose. I saw a fellow scorching in the park the other day and he took a header and I guess he broke his skull."

"I wouldn't get up on one of 'em for a thousand dollars," averred Shire as the mare, having settled down again to her gait, swung into Thirty-fifth Street, "but if I did have one," he went on, "I'd get the kind they call a 'Star'—little wheel in front. Pritchett tells me there's going to be another kind, though. He's been experimenting with a low machine that has two wheels the same size. Rider sits in the middle, on a kind of bridge made of tubing, and the pedals work a chain that turns the hind wheel."

"Doesn't sound practical."

"No, but Pritchett's quite an inventor. He's been making lots of money out of bicycles. I been thinking I might interest him in Oakland property."

At the foot of Grand Boulevard he drove the mare up to a circular drinking fountain where he alighted and unchecked her.

"By gorry, it's hot when you stop moving!" he exclaimed as, grunting, he climbed back to his seat after the animal had drunk. Before driving on, he again removed his derby and mopped his head and neck with the silk handkerchief.

"How long have you lived in Oakland, Holden?" he asked presently, as they moved up the Boulevard.

"Eight years. I built in 'seventy-six."

"Your house must of been one of the first on the block."

"The third. Zenas Wheelock built the first. In fact it was on account of my wife's friendship with the Wheelocks that we moved there."

"The old man's got a son, hasn't he?"

"Yes, Harris Wheelock."

"I've heard of him. What's he like?"

"Pleasant enough."

"Much force?"

"No. Lost his wife a couple of years back, and he's been going around in a kind of a trance ever since. His sister Martha's the strong one of that generation. Keeps house, looks after her father and Harris, brings up Harris' youngster, does everything. Harris is supposed to look after the family affairs; has a little office down town where he putters around, but the only thing he's really interested in is old books."

"Old books?" repeated Shire in a puzzled tone.

Holden assented. "Some of them are so old he handles them the way you'd handle a baby."

"Can't he afford to get new ones?"

"It would be a lot cheaper for him if he did," said Holden. "He collects what they call first editions." And as Shire stared uncomprehendingly, he endeavored to explain:

"Seems it's some kind of a fad. Say Shakespeare or somebody wrote a book long ago. Well, Harris would rather have an old worn copy of it, the way it was printed the first time, than to have a clean up-to-date copy. He'll pay a big price to get the old one. He showed me a book he paid six hundred dollars for."

Shire whistled. "Must be crazy," he declared.



"No, but he was brought up soft. Zenas Wheelock went through a lot of hardships when he was young—he was only sixteen when he started into the wilderness—so he wanted his children to have an easier time of it. At that he lost three out of

five of 'em, and Harris' boy is the only grandchild. Anyhow the old man's always pampered Harris. Sent him East to college, and afterwards to Europe when he ought to have been at work; and to this day he'll go up to Harris' room on a cold winter morning and build a fire for him; and Martha will carry his breakfast up to him in bed."

"When he's well?"

"Yes, just taking it easy. I suppose what's in their minds is that Harris is the only son Zenas Wheelock's got left. The eldest, Lyman, was killed in the Custer Massacre the year I moved to Oakland, and a young officer in the same regiment, who was engaged to Martha Wheelock, was killed beside him. The other two children died back in the 'fifties, both on the same day."

"How'd that happen?"

"Just hard luck," said Holden. "You know there were lots of fires in those days and not much provision for fighting them. Zenas Wheelock helped buy the first fire-engine the town had and was



"It's a great misfortune," he insisted. "He's crazy after money, and he'll get other people crazy."

one of the organizers of the first water company—pipes made out of bored logs. He and his wife were burned out a couple of times before they'd been married ten years so he decided to build a brick house. But in the late fall, just after they moved in, a fire started near by and their house went, so they had to make out the best they could for the balance of the winter, and the town was growing so fast they couldn't get anything but a flimsy cottage built up on posts. I hadn't come to Chicago then—was still living back in Indiana—but I've heard tell about it. Martha Wheelock says the wind used to blow under the house and lift the carpet off the floor in waves; her father and her mother had to take her and the other children out of bed nights and thaw them out at the parlor stove. All five kids got congestion of the lungs and two of them didn't pull through."

"Those old-timers had it awful hard compared with us," said Shire thoughtfully, "and we had it a lot harder than what our children do. Anyhow, I know I did. I was born in a little town on the Mississippi; used to walk a couple of miles barefoot for what schooling I got, and went to work regular when I was twelve. I'll never forget the first horse I owned—had four legs and

that's about all, but I thought I was the lord of all creation, taking my girl out riding. I'm not referring to Mrs. Shire," he put in parenthetically. "I met her later in St. Louis."

"Yes," he went on, "a buckboard looked grand to me when I was Florence's age, but I'd like to see a young fellow try to take her out in one. She wouldn't be seen in it. Has her own trap and she's all the time dinging at me to buy a victoria—for her mother, she says, but I don't guess she'd exactly refuse to ride in it herself."

"Probably not," said Holden. "She's your only child?"

"Yes. We lost one in infancy. How many you got?"

"Just the one. My wife's not strong."

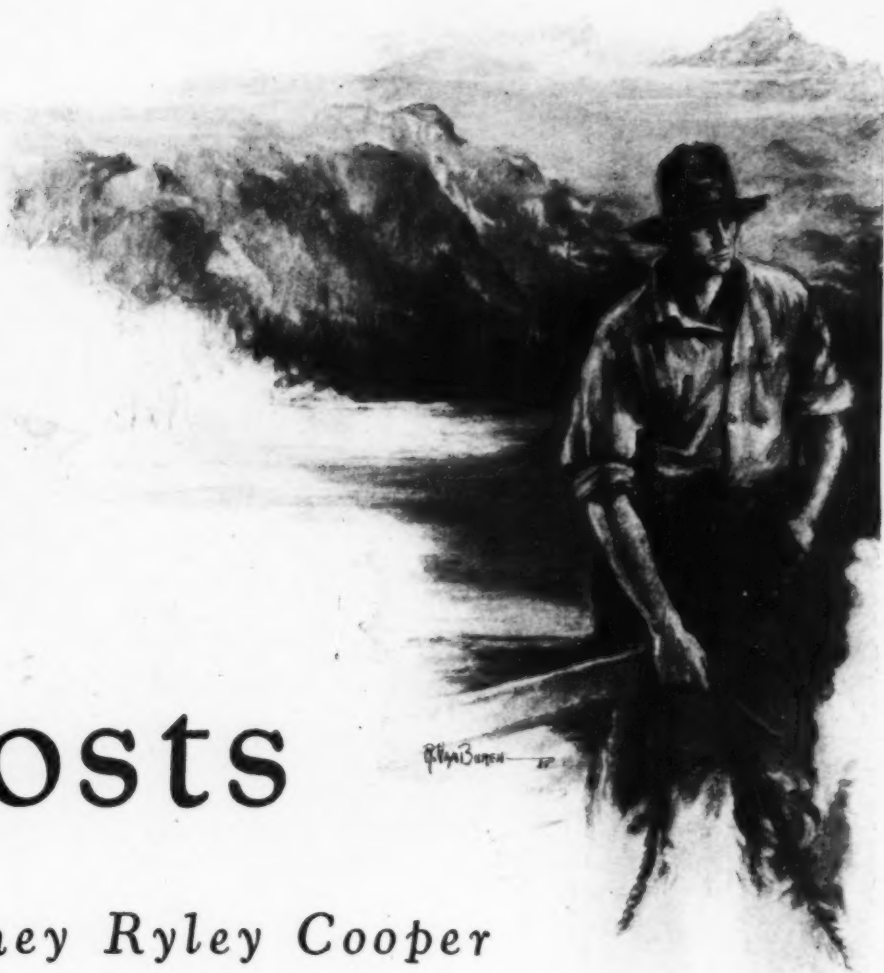
"What I can't understand," said Shire, "is how the women that helped settled this country ever (Continued on page 130)

AFTER exploring sundry hitherto unknown Rocky Mountain heights, Ryley Cooper has gone with Mrs. Cooper to Europe. As this story appears, they are probably looking up at Giotto's tower in Florence and comparing its elevation with that of the shaft-house of the Little Gem mine back in Idaho Springs, Colorado, where they and their dogs live.

Ghosts

By Courtney Ryley Cooper

Illustrated by Raeburn Van Buren



OFF to the left, fringed by the stark skeletons of water-deadened pines, a slate-colored lake trembled and tossed with the ever-whining winds which swept from the ragged pinnacles of the Continental Divide. Flowers flourished at the very edges of the eternal snowdrifts, smiling their beauty where only those who braved the weird solitude of that mysterious land known as the High Country might see. Great tangles of gaunt and lifeless conifers clustered like shivering souls along the more even stretches of the lake shore; junipers crept with twistings and writhings along the rocky slopes; higher, trees which yet lived stood as the last bulwark of life, pleading with outstretched arms that they might be freed from their bitter battle against the continual storms.

It was morning, with faint gold of sun, giving a much-sought happiness to the high hills. The pine-squirrels chirped and chattered and scolded; groundhogs piped in the rock-slides; the chipmunks in their gambols made the most of the temporary warm sunshine, for the creeping masses of black-laden clouds, coming up from the west, were sufficient evidence that the happiness would not continue. And as it in emulation of the animals a man still young, yet with certain aged lines in his features, sat upon a great boulder, hands in hip pockets, staring two thousand feet downward into the green valley of Fall River, where on a side slope stood a tiny log cabin, and where a still tinier form was moving near the doorstep.

The man bore the expression of one who has worked beyond his strength and who has sunk down for a moment to placate his fatigue. But this was morning, early morning; a towel and toilet-kit lay beside a big rock which jutted into the lake; he had just arisen for the day, and there had been no work.

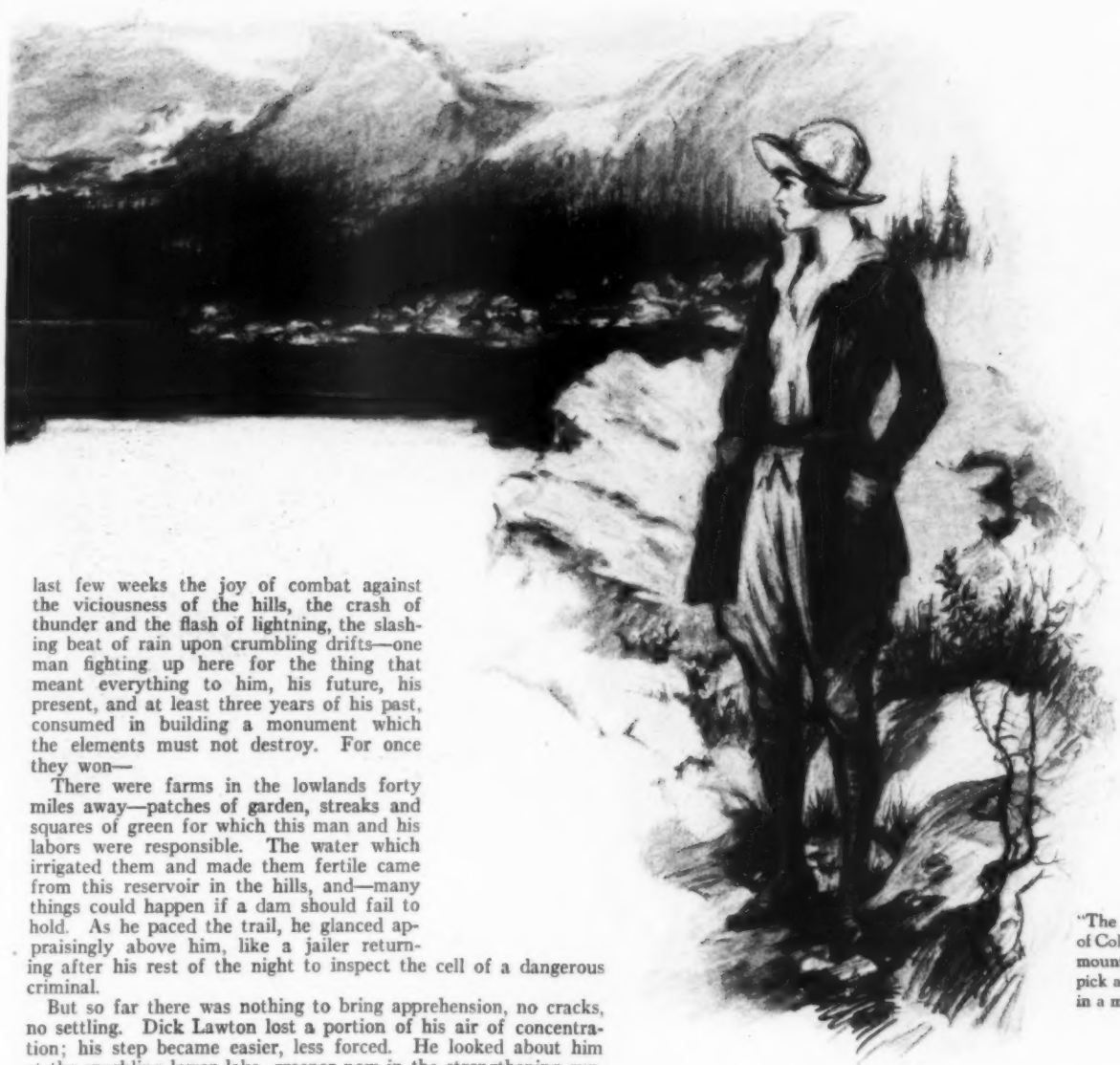
At last he brought his hands forward and clasped them between

his knees. It had been more than a week since he first had noticed the occupancy of the cabin below, first through the curling of smoke from the slanting chimney, then by the figure which daily moved about the little open space above the cabin or strolled the greenery of the dripping glacial valley. It had been a wet spring, and the sun seemed to shine only that it might draw up moisture for new downpours. Fall River was swollen and surging; trails were marshy stretches of unending seepage; the aspens dripped. But for the moment, this was forgotten. The sun was shining, and Dick Lawton of the High Country was looking down upon an unusual thing—a woman. Who she was he did not know; identity seemed of little consequence; suffice that she was young and active and that she—

"I guess anybody would remind me!" the man said aloud at last as if suddenly awakened. Then, with a sudden intake of breath, he slid to the ground, and for the moment grim and taciturn, gathered his toilet-kit and moved toward his little log cabin at the end of the lake for the cooking of his breakfast.

When he came forth again, some of that grim look had vanished. It was time for the work of the day—work which must be pushed with every ounce of endeavor; clouds and storms and melting drifts are not the friends of one who seeks to hoard the watery riches of the Continental Divide. As he moved along the trail toward a sheer rise at the upper end of the lake, there seemed to be about him a sort of stolid enjoyment, the concentration of a man shot with fever that burns without consuming. This was his happiness, the joy of loneliness, the sort of joy that gave pleasure because it hurt, because it came from labor of the hands, leaving the mind free to stray to things it gladly would have forgotten.

But it was the joy of accomplishment nevertheless—in the



last few weeks the joy of combat against the viciousness of the hills, the crash of thunder and the flash of lightning, the slashing beat of rain upon crumbling drifts—one man fighting up here for the thing that meant everything to him, his future, his present, and at least three years of his past, consumed in building a monument which the elements must not destroy. For once they won—

There were farms in the lowlands forty miles away—patches of garden, streaks and squares of green for which this man and his labors were responsible. The water which irrigated them and made them fertile came from this reservoir in the hills, and—many things could happen if a dam should fail to hold. As he paced the trail, he glanced appraisingly above him, like a jailer returning after his rest of the night to inspect the cell of a dangerous criminal.

But so far there was nothing to bring apprehension, no cracks, no settling. Dick Lawton lost a portion of his air of concentration; his step became easier, less forced. He looked about him at the sparkling lower lake, greener now in the strengthening sun, with now and then a streak of silvered red as a rainbow trout leaped. He whistled to the chipmunks as he moved from the lower body of water along the steepening trail toward the higher reservoir, a strong, wide-shouldered, booted man whose arms swung easily from shoulders thick from manual labor. A ground-hog piped at him from high on the rock-slides, and Dick Lawton answered the call. These were his friends—these his companions since the day he had come among them three years before, downcast, lonely, grim with the determination to create victory out of defeat; they had been his only friends in the racking battle against memories and retrospection and doubtful goals which had followed; they were his only friends now.

Upward, still upward, finally to turn and zigzag up the steep incline of a raw scar across a saddle of the hills—rocks and earth thrown high into a hundred-yard embankment. At last he was at the top, and paused there panting, to gaze out over the tremendous stretch of water which dwarfed by comparison the lake which he had just left. The tremendous reservoir seemed higher; the lapping waters were splashing within six inches of the top of the dam; at the spillway the noise of the rushing flood had grown even more thunderous. Lawton pulled off his leather jacket, and like a man stripping for a long struggle, opened his shirt and rolled up his sleeves. Then in matter-of-fact fashion he turned for the little dynamite-house which stood at the right of the dam. Five minutes later, in a tremendous depression in the mountain-side, where by pick and shovel and powder he had

"The whole State of Colorado full of mountains, and I pick a place within a mile of you!"

gained the material for his slow-growing embankment, he "capped" his powder upon a giant boulder, clamped the fulminate cap in place, scratched a match and ran for shelter.

A wait, then the explosion, cracking sharp against the thin air, followed after a long time by roll upon roll of reverberation as the distant crags received the impact and threw it back again. The splashing of vagrant fragments upon the water, a lessening acrid odor as the smoke drifted away; then Lawton, working slowly as one must do to conserve his strength against the enervating agencies of high altitude, set to the loading of his tram.

An hour passed, in sunshine, as the little tram squeaked upon its rusty rails, to be dumped at the water edge of the dam, to be returned, filled and dumped again, with no cessation in labors save when Lawton crouched in safety as he awaited the blast, or leaned upon his long-handled shovel, and with apprehension in his eyes, watched the steady massing of ominous clouds. At last a flash, gray-green, zigzagging its way along the ragged tops of the mountains; the crash of thunder—so close that it seemed within arm's-length. The man went to a small cleft in the rocks and came forth a moment later in sou'wester and yellow slicker. The rain was falling now, in ragged sheets which seemed veritably to dent the surface of the great reservoir; but still the little tram squeaked forth and squeaked back again, distributing its puny piles of earth and rock against the face of the dam. Noon,



"Ghosts!" he railed. "Ghosts everywhere. Stay away from that dam! That's my pit, my

and a halt for a bit of luncheon, eaten in the shelter of an overhanging rock, while the rain continued to drive downward, and the thunder rolled with the growling of a beast loath to leave its prey. At last, however, the sun flashed out again, throwing rainbows against the distant cliffs, and filtering through the spray of drifting mist. Lawton stood with hands on hips, looking about him—the rushing rivulets tearing their discolored way down every cleft in the rocks, the shrunken surface of a near-by drift, suddenly caved by the onslaught of the rain, the grayer appearance of the lake.

"It'll raise it an inch, easy," he announced aloud. Then doggedly he doffed his slicker—and again the tram creaked on.

For an hour, then two—past midafternoon; then suddenly, in the midst of its journey, it halted; and Lawton turned like a man in response to a sudden warning, stared down the trail with lips parted, head forward, eyes sharp as with fear. As suddenly he straightened, and in embarrassed fashion rubbed his mud-soiled hands against the sides of his trousers as if to free them from their muck. Harassed, expectant, wondering, yet half-fearful, he awaited the approaching figure as it turned slowly on the last twist of the trail and came upward. Fifty feet away, it came to a halt. Silent man and silent woman, they stood looking at each other.

The color had left their faces. Again Dick Lawton rubbed his grimy hands, while the girl bent and removed a twig from where it had caught in the lacings of her boots. Then she raised her head and forced a smile.

"Oh! I didn't know I'd find you here," she said at last.

"No?" Lawton's eyes fed upon her—with the greediness of starvation—upon the brightness of her hair with the sun shining through it, the slimness of her, the piquancy and prettiness of her, in spite of the pallor which their meeting seemed to have caused. And then they stood again, silent once more, the girl half-turned, and looking out over the glistening surface of the lower lake, the man devouring with his eyes this personification of a world upon which he had closed the doors. Yet it was before him, in the cut of her trim outing clothes, the tailored closeness at the knees, the smartness of whipcord, the well-placed pockets of her fitted coat. A world he had forsworn, and with it—

"No?" he asked again.

"I—thought I'd take a walk," came at last in answer. "I heard the blasting up here."

Lawton nodded.

"Yes—I was doing that. Filling in here."

"I see." Then silence again for a moment, her eyes upon him, his grimy hands, the mud on his boots and on his flannel shirt and ancient, tattered hat, pulled tight over his head against the sweep of the wind. Appraising him, and he knew it—but his own gaze insisted upon seeing only that her eyes were as prettily brown as ever, that her expression was still the tomboyish, piquant one which had been in every cloud for him, every distant patch of snow, metamorphosing itself into soft pictures at twilight.



dam, my work!" Everywhere about him were vague, threatening figures.

Then suddenly his gaze centered—and remained there until she noticed it and dropped her hand to concealment at her side. But the first glance had been sufficient to cause a slight catch of his breath—there was neither glisten of diamond nor gleam of gold.

The girl flushed, as though he had openly gloated. "I must have misunderstood about your project out here," she said presently. "I thought you were on the other side of the range."

Lawton put a hand on his tram.

"So?" he asked; instinctive bitterness suddenly had begun to boil within him. "Sorry I disappointed you. Coincidence, isn't it?"

"Quite," she answered. "The whole State of Colorado full of mountains, and I should pick a place within a mile of you!"

Again the bitterness, but curiosity was the stronger. "Then you're in that cabin down there?"

"Yes. Neighbors, as it were."

"For how long?" A man hoping it would be forever, he asked it with his every manner belying his hopes. She caught the inflection in his voice.

"Not long enough to cause embarrassment," she answered quickly. "Brother and I thought we would take a little vacation. He had to leave for a few days. We'll be going back home soon."

"To New York?"

Her silence he construed as assent.

"I—didn't know whether you still lived there. Still, Lois," he added, "I might have."

She smiled caustically. "I suppose"—again she glanced at the griminess of him—"you'll want me to report your success out here."

He straightened sharply. It had cut—deeper than even she had known.

"If you have the ability!" "I'll do my best. And"—this time the causticity was gone; there was a certain childish inquiry about her tone—"you have made a success, haven't you, Dick? I've heard you have."

"From whom?"

"There was an article in one of the Sunday papers. Sent in, I suppose, by a correspondent in Denver—"

"Former Spendthrift Beats Back," or something like that," the man quoted bitterly.

"Along that line," she said. Lawton turned to his tramcar.

"Never mind helping the publicity along," he said grimly. "None of the people you'd tell it to would understand, anyway."

"Oh! I'm sorry I mentioned it—that I intruded. Well—" She turned and looked about her. "I suppose I should be starting down again. It's quite a way."

"Yes. You'll find it easier, if you'll take the trail to the left. You probably came up the wrong one."

"I probably did," she answered; then she stepped downward, while Lawton, with the perversity of human-kind, swung to his tram; its creaking as he pushed it deep into the recesses of the pit mingled with the slight sound of falling pebbles that scattered at her step down the zigzag trail. She was only a spot in the distance when the man came out again.

A spot in the distance—vague, indefinable, moving slowly along the trail, while he stood and watched, he who had dreamed in his loneliness of what he would say to her if ever they should meet again! How proud he'd be, triumphant.

Triumphant! Standing there in mucking clothes, embarrassed, surly, like an accused boy caught in a petty trick. None of the sentences which had been stored year on year, none of the understanding, none of the fine triumph which he had visioned—

Only a mucker, lounging beside his tram and rubbing his hands at his sides, driving away the thing he had wished for and begged for and prayed for! Again he looked in the direction of the tiny figure in the distance, wearily, with a beaten air.

"Oh, I don't know," he mused, "she probably just came up here to gloat over me. After all my boasts!"

He turned wearily to his tram again. The clouds were gathering anew, obliterating the lengthening shadows of the dropping sun. Soon again there was the lash of wind and the blast of storm—and a man slowly pushing a tram to and fro until the blackness of the night should turn him at last to his little cabin.

There was little time to waste these days, when every onslaught meant a rising of the tremendous expanse of backwater, every seeping drift and swollen rill piling up the odds against him.

Sleep and work, work and sleep! (Continued on page 153)

The Hybrid

Illustrated by
Addison Burbank

By

Lilith Benda

NO other magazine in America has revealed to the larger public of intelligent readers more new writers of real distinction than has *The Red Book*. Here, for instance, a writer whose name in these pages may perhaps be new to you, but which it is hoped you may henceforth encounter often, contributes one of the most vivid stories of its type published in some time—the life-drama of a woman of cloudy ancestry.

NEIL BRAITH caught his breath, at the next instant recalling how often he had heard of a breath-taking loveliness in women, and how odd it should be that now, at forty, he was for the first time encountering it.

Beneath a little archway of clipped box only a few yards from him she was standing, a slender, swaying shaft of roses and gold. Her head high held, she seemed to be laughing a salutation up at the rising moon.

There was the tint and texture of tea-roses in her skin, all a satin creaminess shot through with rose and gold. Her eyes had the glint of blue flame in them. Gently, one by one, she was fingering the pearls that hung in a long strand from her throat, as if she were telling some blithe and secret rosary to a deity a little sated by the sins and sorrows of a weary world.

All at once Braith felt a thrill of mystery and delight, felt himself at the brink of something amazing—felt the tingle and suspense of it, as if a curtain were rising.

Across a tiny lawn she was advancing now. In her very gait pride of race seemed to assert itself, pride of birth. That clean, fine smile. . . . A wave of angry embarrassment swept over him. It was outrageous to trace the origin of this glorious creature to a sordid passion, to attempt payment with the substantial check in his pocket, upon any claim she might make against the New England Imbries. His mission disgusted him.

Gaunt and sunken-eyed in her mourning dress, only yesterday Mrs. Imbrie had come into his office. He had been moved to pity by the flush of shame on her thin cheek, and the indistinct, frightened mumble in which this friend of his mother's girlhood laid bare the blot on the Imbrie 'scutcheon.

Would Mr. Braith help her? Something delicate, something tragic. . . . It seemed that her husband—that Dr. Imbrie had a daughter, another daughter, of whose existence he'd had no inkling. Mr. Braith's father had been her husband's friend. Had his father ever mentioned to him the woman who—the woman in Vienna? No?

Well, while a divinity student, Dr. Imbrie had been sent for a year of continental travel. . . . Mr. Braith must understand that Imbrie had been only twenty at the time. Tales had reached home of—a very notorious character, a Bianca Lobner, a Viennese. . . . Mr. Braith's father was five years Imbrie's senior. He had been dispatched by the family to Europe. He had brought Imbrie home. Mr. Braith must understand that a boy of twenty. . . . Well, to finish the story, a year or two

later she had married Dr. Imbrie. Mr. Braith knew how happy and full their life had been. . . . Head of the theological seminary, and then their three splendid girls.

Floundering and incoherent in her misery, under her breath Mrs. Imbrie had gone on:

A few months ago the young woman had—had walked in. Dr. Imbrie was in the garden watering the tulip-bed, she remembered. . . . Walked right up to him—out of a clear sky. Very terrible—a very terrible hour. Dr. Imbrie had wanted to acknowledge the young woman before the world. His conscience—the New England conscience. But she had prevailed upon him for their girls' sake. . . . Dr. Imbrie had been failing for a long while. A little later he had died.

Now would Mr. Braith undertake this mission for her? She had no men in the family to whom she could turn. There was a little money left, safely invested. She had divided it into five equal shares. She could depend, couldn't she, upon Mr. Braith's courtesy? He would seek out the young woman, and turn her share of the legacy over to her?

Sheer decency had forced him to grant the broken woman's plea. He had foreseen an unpleasant hour, a garish vulgarity, a touch of pathos, perhaps, but never this setting, this tiny white villa perched atop a Riverside Drive apartment house—it was the first time he had seen one of these roof bungalows, with a fountain spray on his face, a new moon overhead, and what looked much like a princess out of medieval legendry smiling a welcome at him.

"It's pleasanter out here, don't you think, Mr. Braith? These July nights of yours are apt to become a trifle spirit-blighting indoors."

She spoke swiftly, in a limpid flutelike voice with the caroling timbre of a child about it, and the aloof precision, too, of a seasoned mondaine. He could see that for all a glint of mockery in her eyes she appreciated the awkwardness of his position, and sought with a casual kindness to put him at his ease. He muttered a polite inanity while a sharp mortification over the character of his errand arose within him. For all her courteous air, she had not asked him to sit down.

An awkward pause followed. Abruptly she broke it.

"An embarrassing mission, isn't it, Mr. Braith? Of course I know that Mrs. Imbrie has sent you here with money for me. It would be pleasanter for all of us if I could salve the Puritan conscience with an acceptance. I can't, though. I'll have none of it. That's quite final."

"But—"

"Quite final, Mr. Braith. . . . Sorry."

She was moving away from him, actually nodding a dismissal. And she had not so much as asked him to sit down! He felt a flush of resentment mount to his forehead at the thought of being thus cheated of that vague something which lured so potently here. An idyl just in the budding, perhaps—a nocturne in a major key—

All at once an expedient presented itself. He had quite forgotten the bundle under his arm.

"Miss—Miss Imbrie—"

"I'm Miss Lobner, of course—Bianca Lobner. It's a case of reckoning lineage from the distaff side. The bar sinister has its little formalities."



Roughly he disengaged himself. "Worried about you, Bianca—paternal interest—"

"Miss—Miss Lobner, then." He was blurting and hemming like a schoolboy in his effort to break down the barrier of her aloof complaisance. "My father had a flair for painting, stifled during his school years. But over his desk there always hung a sketch in oils which he'd made—er—on his voyage back from Europe the time that—that—but you know the story. Once or twice I caught my father looking with the strangest wistfulness at that sketch. It was the last thing he ever painted. . . . Miss Lobner, please try not to think me intrusive, but I felt that the picture belonged to you, and I brought it with me tonight."

He had scarce finished when she was tearing the wrappings apart. He heard a soft exclamation, saw the color deepen in her cheeks. "I've seen portraits of my mother by great artists, but they never, never, quite got her, as this does. The purple eyes that were too big for the other tiny features. She was so fragile, so mignonne, my mother."

With a little fierce gesture she caught the painting to her breast.

"All these years she never mentioned my father. Only when she was delirious and dying, she began to call for her Sammee—

over and over again for hours, like that: 'Sam-mee—Sam-mee.' . . . She kept humming a Viennese waltz, and calling for him to dance with her. . . . And I thought my father was old and lonely, and that it would make him happy to know that at the end his Bianca called for him. So I went to him. . . . And it was awful—ah!"

A sudden lift of her head, the stifling of a sob, and she had checked her agitation. But her eyes remained gentle. The chill aplomb was gone. For the first time she stretched out her hand.

"Sit down, Mr. Braith, sit down!"

WITHIN a week Braith had seen Bianca Lobner three times. A month later it was as if existence hinged upon a housetop villa on Riverside Drive.

There was such a blithe alertness about this Bianca. Lips mobile, eyelids fluttering, nostrils delicately aquiver, it was as if she were breathlessly agog for some superb destiny to which the gods had dedicated her, for something glorious that beckoned and called her. In such human motives and human standards as made

of her outlaw origin a predicament and tragedy, she appeared to have neither interest nor concern.

Braith had reached the two-score mark without matrimonial adventures. Now, since that first starlit hour with Bianca, he felt a new zest and gusto for whatever existence might offer. It was good each day to see the welcome in her eyes, and to hear the laughter that trilled an obligato to her lavish flattery. "I'm glad you're lean and tawny, and towering, Neil. I'm glad you've a thin, bony face, and hair all sprinkled like fine silver fox. You're my very first beau. One's particular about one's very first beau. You're quite, quite satisfactory, Neil."

Little by little he gleaned that her girlhood had been lonely. She had few acquaintances, no friends. Under the tutelage of English governesses, she had toured the world for years. The Prater, the Bois de Bologne, the Nevsky Prospect, the orange gardens of Cadiz and the lacquered temples of Shanghai were all familiar to her, not in a barren Baedeker sense, but rather as spots endeared by the same haunting spell which their native-born knew. Her eyes lighted to the memory of the Hungerberg at sundown, "where the sound of angelus bells, and the sweep of eagles, give a finishing touch to the magic and majesty of it, Neil."

She showed him one day a portfolio of photographs. Curiously enough, they were all pictures of houses—old Georgian manor houses, châteaux on the Loire, a Venetian palazzo, one and all the birthplaces of generations upon generations of gently bred folk. . . . With a touch of pride he had never before felt, he brought her a faded impression of the big granite Colonial home of his forebears in West Virginia, closed for almost half a century now. She gave it a long look, and without comment slipped it casually among the other photographs.

With a strange shyness, on the alert for a hint of ridicule or disinterest, she showed him, too, another collection—of rare prints, portraits of lords and ladies of ancient courts, patricians all, and with the stamp of race pride upon their features.

Her two most prized possessions, though, proved to be the manuscript of a novel which had roused the world to enthusiasm twenty years before, inscribed with a finely phrased couplet to her mother, and the Puritan psalm-book, dated 1680, which her father had left behind him in Vienna at the time of his summary recall. With a touching pride she aired a surprisingly sound knowledge of the early Puritans, and spoke familiarly of that ancestress of hers who had jilted a Mather—"or was it an Eliot or Bradford? At any rate, I have the whole story. I had it typed from old letters in the Concord library."

So, as the weeks passed, little by little she admitted him to a happy intimacy, became less on her guard, vouchsafed stray, puzzling sidelights upon that whole-souled sweep toward a definite and glorious goal which, however hazily, he grasped as the leit-motif, so to speak, of her existence. There were delicious dinners served on the little balcony that overlooked the Hudson, small ceremonials in flawless taste, the silver and napery all marked with a crested "B. L.". . . . A pair of staid spinsters who had served the other Bianca for twenty years, served them now. "And how do you like Viennese cookery, Neil? It's hybrid—German heft and Gallic gusto."

He liked best, though, the tea-hour, when in a sunset glow they sat near a fountain where sparrows were splashing, and chirping for the crumbs Bianca tossed them, and the tea roses, which each day he sent, stood about in big bowls, lustrous with the same rose and gold that enriched Bianca's loveliness.

He was watching, one day, the play of her long fingers among the pearls at her throat, and felt all at once, very sharply, the spell of a time-hallowed craving in the air.

For the first time that afternoon there had been a strained half-hour of actual bickering. He had been moved by a chance remark to a paternal lecture upon Bianca's extravagances. At the rate she was spending it, she had money enough only to last her

for four or five years.

Yet when he urged a sound and lucrative investment, she merely shrugged, hummed a waltz under her breath, turned a winsomely wry face toward him, and finally, as a magnificent concession, agreed to invest a few thousands for the sole purpose of securing her servants against an indigent old age. Toward her dependents, he had noticed often, she seemed to feel almost a feudal sense of responsibility. But the thought of safeguarding her own future merely roused her to a wayward recklessness. She waved all remonstrance aside, even his feeble plea that she insure her jewels.

He had sunk into a sulky silence, when quite against his will the spell of an ancient magic aroused him now, as he watched her fingers straying among the pearls.

She caught his smile.

"I've a particular fondness for pearls. I was brought up on them, as it were. My mother had a gorgeous triple strand that had been in the imperial house of Russia. Purely as a matter of sentimental sacrifice, she sold them one by one to provide for my upbringing. Think, just! A young girl reared with the most rigid correctness on the proceeds of an extra-legal love-token! Quaint, isn't it?"

In response he scowled. For in her eyes he had seen that glint of uneasy defiance with which he was becoming familiar. Unfailingly, and always with an assumption of levity, each time that a silence, a handclasp, a long look bespoke delight in the offing, she would shatter the spell with some callous and flippant reference to her irregular origin.

After a long silence, in dull resentment he rose. But her hand grazed his. He saw that she was standing too. The glowing oval of her face was upturned to him, her big eyes fixed gravely upon his. All at once there surged within him a tenderness, tinged with awe and a new sense of unworthiness.





She laughed out into the storm: "I'm a mongrel, Neil. I'm a hybrid."

Steadily she scrutinized him. Little by little, as if at the behest of an indomitable will, her lips were twisting themselves back into a smile. And presently, like the music of tiny bells, came the faint trill of her laughter.

"Neil, Neil, but you're a hugely amusing dear! I seem always to be worrying some one over my future. You remind me of my mother. Her little one's future harassed her, my mother would say. Her little one must have a career. So difficult to arrange a suitable marriage. Unfortunate that convent life had lost the true *cachet*. Her little one must travel and study—travel and study. She would arrange another tour for her little one, to Brazil this year. She had heard there was a scattering of Javanese public women in the South American ports. For majesty of gait and carriage her little one must study them—study these Javanese. . . . At times my mother was droll."

There was no mistaking the mockery and defiance and pain in the flaming blue eyes. Yet she smiled tranquilly.

"Pass your cup, Neil. And another little cake, no?"

All at once the magic that had so long been hovering, charged through at its fullest. He saw things through a ruddy whirl. The breeze had died. And yet something was stirring the lace over Bianca's breast. Her slim hands outstretched themselves. The red lips parted slowly, curled. The eyelids trembled a little, then fluttered down. And on her face the rose tints deepened, only swiftly to ebb into a pale gold pallor, into a look of sheer virginal abandon that smote him to the quick, and at the same instant wrenched him free from the sorcery here.

All glad surrender, a clean-eyed girl was lying in his arms. . . . Roughly he disengaged himself, and laughed, aware that the sound came like a dry cackle from his throat. "Worried about you, Bianca—paternal interest—"

He stopped short, silenced by the brooding hurt in her eyes.

DURING the next day or two Braith found himself given to unpleasant hours of self-appraisal. Undeniably he loved Bianca—if this was love, this riotous medley of the emotions wherein a savage hankering warred with tenderness, and humility and awe. . . . Yet, to his shamed perplexity, he balked at the thought of marriage, of so complete an upheaval of old associations and ideals as inevitably it would involve. He could vision the hurt amazement of his family at the entrance of a lady of unsavory antecedents into the august Braith fold. An affront to the ancestral tree! Nor yet, try as he would, could he quite free himself from the selfsame aversion. (Continued on page 158)

The Old Home Town

THE versatile genius of Rupert Hughes has offered you a wide variety in his twelve novels—all of which were first published in the pages of this magazine. But—as many enthusiastic readers write in to tell us—never since “The Old Nest” first won him fame, has he written in so attractive a vein as in this heart-warming story of a typical Midwest townsfolk. There are a thousand Carthages in these United States; and the progress of these Carthaginians is a veritable American epic.

By

Rupert Hughes

Illustrated by Will Foster

The Story So Far:

A QUIET town, usually, Carthage yet had its crowded days of excitement. Thus the strange “ax murder” and the trial of Jere Haden, who was accused of it. For at the trial partisans of Haden staged a small riot in the courtroom, and some one shot and mortally wounded Nelson Webb, the prosecuting attorney. Mrs. Webb hurried home from the wedding of Eliza Lail to bid farewell to her dying husband—and a little later certain of the townsfolk saved further legal expense by lynching Haden.

The widowed Mrs. Webb got along somehow, and in a few years the oldest boy Ben was able to help with his earnings as a mechanic. All through these years Ben from afar worshiped Odalea Lail, who had been a flower-girl at the wedding the day his father was shot. And when one fall her cousin and traditional beau “Ulie” Budlong went back to college while Odalea stayed home, opportunity came to Ben Webb—strangely.

For Ben was summoned to mend the run-down Lail furnace, and while seeking to make life more comfortable for his adored Odalea, he hit upon a device for automatic water-heating that seemed likely to win him fortune. Odalea rewarded his successful experiment in her own house by going buggy-riding with him in the accepted form which the automobile was just beginning to displace. Over the bridge and along the river they drove; and when after a picnic supper at sunset, Ben took her in his arms and kissed her, she did not protest too much.

Yet on the homeward drive they each began to realize the obstacles: Odalea the horror of her family at a match with the lowly plumber; Ben the duty he owed to his widowed mother and to the younger children—how could he support two households? And when they reached home, each encountered lively demonstrations of the situation—Odalea a mother and father and her dominant aunt Mrs. Budlong, the social arbiter of Carthage, sitting up wrathfully to greet her.

For two great pieces of news had come to Carthage that day: the railroad was to build its shop there and send in many workmen, along with an office force of socially attractive young Easterners; and the dam across the river, which with its power-plant had for years been the hope of the town (and especially of Odalea's father, who had plunged in real estate), again promised to become a fact.

For once, some measure of realization followed close on prophecy: the shops were built; the Easterners came; the town boomed. Ben was almost too busy earning money—to send his younger brother Guido to college, and to procure training for his sister Petunia's wonderful voice—to mourn the Odalea he had felt in duty bound to forsake. And Odalea was almost too much taken up with the attentions of young Mr. Bleecker of New York, to weep for Ben. Yet the railroad shops and the young Easterners

departed almost as suddenly as they had come: a Napoleon of finance had gobbled the road and consolidated it with another.

A time of doldrums followed for Carthage and for Odalea—for young Bleecker was one of the first to go, and he did not come back again. And then at last action began on the dam in earnest and brought a new group of interesting strangers to Carthage. Chief among them was Ian Craigie, the great engineer; and a lucky chance made him acquainted with Ben Webb and his mechanical talents. (*The story continues in detail:*)

THE mating-instinct and its offspring love are the perfect mingling of the divine and the devilish. And this eternal truism has not often had so perfect a proof as it had in Carthage.

This modern town with the ancient name suffered like a classic city from successive waves of barbarian invasion; and the waves were far enough apart to leave the sharpest marks. The ruins of Carthage still show them. Yet Carthage town is by no means a ruin, and its ruins are not temples, circuses and baths, or their modern equivalents: churches, fair-grounds and barber-shops.

The ruins in Carthage are hidden from the citizens themselves: for the ruins are the piteous hearts of women, and of men too, who did not quite either live or love as they might have done, as they ought to have been permitted to do, and as they almost did. That “almost” was their tragedy; for “almost” means that they were near enough to their desire to know what it would mean, and to suffer bitterly from its loss.

The town goes on and the hearts throb on, limping a little, but making the best of it. And that makes it the more pitiful; for bravery in defeat, and the honorable hypocrisy that tries to cheat a sob into a laugh, are the very attar of pathos.

The young railroad men were the first invaders to shake up the calm into which the town had sunk. They found three classes of mates eagerly awaiting them: first, a crowd of young women who were just a little past the right to the name of “girls,” though they were still girls at heart, with little experience of flirtation and less of passion; second, a throng of girls who had just bloomed and were aglow with readiness to be plucked by young men, of whom Carthage had a marked dearth: third, a mob of buds not yet quite girls, but ready and willing to love at the first summons.

All three of these dormant classes were startled into life and stimulated to hunger by the unexpected reveille of opportunity. The most desperate competition ensued, and brought out the devilish in the divine.

In a heart well-schooled in sympathy, there is compassion for the devils as well as for the saints; there is regretful understanding of the torment that brings out cruelty, and pity rather than

Odalea even wrote and read an essay on Browning's "The Ring and the Book."



contempt for the soul that is not strong enough to abstain from selfishness, is not endowed with pity and therefore needs pitying.

At any rate, the peaceful town of Carthage became a battlefield where no quarter was shown even by the gentlest women for their sisters. The gentler they were, the harder they fought in order to get their gentleness across to the men it was intended for.

The girls of summer-age took full advantage of their prime and demanded the hour that was theirs. Under the urge of finding lovers and husbands to fulfill their destinies, they thrust their elder sisters aside into the eternal discard, and pushed their younger sisters back to wait for their own futures. They said to their elder sisters:

"Don't be ridiculous! You're doomed to be old maids, and you might as well admit it."

They said to their younger sisters:

"Back to your dolls, you silly infants! Wait till you grow up before you look for beaux. And quit following us around."

The railway men and the midsummer girls proceeded to turn the sleepy town into a pleasure-resort seething with love-affairs, betrothals, farces, tragedies and high romances.

Then, without warning, the railway men vanished almost overnight, leaving the midsummer girls in a bitterer case than their autumnal or vernal sisters, since their elder sisters had not even tasted hope and the younger could still expect it. For years there was little lovemaking or marrying in Carthage, since the young men born in town were few and sullen with neglect. They had taken their wives from other towns or from the neglected families of Carthage whom the railroad men had not even touched.

Suddenly came the invasion of the engineers. The dam was to be built! In place of a company of railroad clerks tied down to offices, there came a horde of outdoor fellows, husky cave-



Tom Merrick approached Odalea and in a husky voice asked her to come out into the garden.

men, forest-men, hardened in the wilderness and famished for the society of pretty girls.

The girls who had known the railroad men and been left with broken engagements, indefinitely postponed marriages and fractured hearts, rejoiced with a fierce rapture. But they were quenched at once; for all this while their younger sisters had been helplessly growing round and mellow and ripe for love and marriage. And now they used with equal ruthlessness the words their elder sisters had said to the eldest sisters:

"Don't be ridiculous! You're doomed to be old maids, and you might as well admit it!"

And they said to their younger sisters, who had been mere children in the railway era, but were willing now for precocious philandering:

"Back to your dolls, you silly infants! Wait till you grow up before you look for beaux. And quit following us around!"

Something like this has always been happening wherever there have been families with equality enough for self-assertion and selfishness. But Carthage knew it with almost unique clearness, because of the two sharp epochs of invasion, with their wide contrasts between blight and abundance.

There seemed to be more happiness in Carthage when there was less, for in the lethargies between the love-wars, the families were not disturbed by the frenzies of the mating-instinct. But neither were they enriched by them.

Of course, the engineers knew no more of this hidden bitterness than the railroad men had known. Families that were split with hatred based on love kept their internal feuds to themselves and presented smiling faces to their callers. Though their sisters, cousins or neighbors might be shrieking at each other in rage, the appearance of an engineer on the horizon, or the sound of his hand on the doorbell, caused an immediate truce. The girl of the age between, and her elder and younger enemies,

greeted him with hospitality and said a few things about the weather. Then the elder went away to her spinsterly tasks and the younger ran back to her childish games, leaving the middle-sized bear to the business of courtship.

Chief among the few exceptions to this rule was Odalea Lail. Though she had been loved and left by railroad men, she was still permitted to make her choice among the engineers. But this was because she was the niece of Mrs. Ulysses S. G. Budlong, and Mrs. Budlong was determined to marry Odalea to an out-of-town man and get her off her hands, lest after all she should lure Mrs. Budlong's boy, Ulie Junior, back into her meshes, —or worse yet, resume her humiliating affair with that awful plumber Ben Webb.

The true greatness of Mrs. Budlong as the Queen of Carthage was never made so manifest as in the crisis of the arrival of the army of young men who were to build the dam. When the future railway presidents had descended on the village and made it hum with love, Mrs. Budlong had gathered about her the choicest, prettiest, ripest girls in town and had made possible no end of engagements and wedding-plans. She had done her best for her niece, and if Odalea had not managed to secure a husband, it was not Mrs. Budlong's fault.

When the railroad men were suddenly removed, leaving their betrothals all awry, Mrs. Budlong could watch the wreckage with a clear conscience: she had done her angelic utmost. And the moment the dam-builders were announced, she woke to her new opportunity, and surveyed the melancholy scene where all the



cards of invitation. They listened in vain for the telephone to ring and pour out Mrs. Budlong's famous: "Oh, my dear, will you come to me on Thursday next at eight? I'm asking just a few friends for a little dancing. Do come—there's a dear!" Only their younger sisters received envelopes or verbal messages. Mrs. Budlong filled her house and her porches with none but the girls who had never been to market—always excepting Odalea Lail of course.

In the first place, Odalea was a relative; and an unmarried relative was a blot on Mrs. Budlong's escutcheon. If she had done her best when Odalea was poor and shabby, she could be counted on not to turn against the girl now that her father had come into belated prosperity by selling the lots he had been compelled to hang onto for so many dismal years.

Furthermore, Odalea did not quite belong to the wilted derelicts whom the railroaders had abandoned. For Odalea had been a little young at that time, and Mrs. Budlong had pushed her forward. She was a little older now than the rest of Mrs. Budlong's guests, yet not so old as the virgins who gnashed their teeth outside.

In spite of this, Odalea was again a disappointment to Mrs. Budlong. That girl had always been a terror to manage. First, she had infatuated her cousin Ulie Junior, and Mrs. Budlong had been forced to ship him out of town to get him away from her. Then, no doubt from sheer spite, she had descended to a shameless interest in the plumber. The railroad men had rescued her from that, and Mrs. Budlong had selected the best of them all for Odalea—no less a personage than Evert Bleeker. Somehow Odalea had let him slip out of her clutches, and after that came the drouth of men.

There is no word and no crape for the widowhood that follows a broken engagement, but the mourning is as deep as the partial marriage was happy. And Odalea had been happy with Evert Bleeker. He was gay, careless of appearances and consequences, yet tender and considerate.

despondent girls of yesteryear were beginning to wake from their love-hibernation with a terrible hunger.

A less intelligent social leader would have tried to complete the work she had begun and provide new matches for her old clients. But Mrs. Budlong knew better. She realized that if she offered to the engineers these secondhand young women, her new customers would recognize the cheat and take their trade elsewhere. Some eager rival of Mrs. Budlong would give a party and invite the engineers to meet the fresh beauties who had been too young to be loved by the railroad men. And the engineers would flock in a mass to the new emporium, leaving Mrs. Budlong high and dry.

It was not cruelty on Mrs. Budlong's part that led her to sacrifice all those pitifully needy girls, still beautiful, many of them, all of them still nubile. It was not cruelty but a frank recognition of fact. Those girls had had their chance and lost it, and Mrs. Budlong could not find them another. She could not perform the miracles that heaven would not.

Therefore, when Mrs. Budlong gave her first reception to the first engineers, her former protégées watched for the slow-poke mail-carrier in vain. He brought them none of her well-known

His divorce from her had been nothing like a jilt. She blamed herself for it: had he not implored her to meet his mother, only to be baffled by her panic-stricken refusal? If he had not kept his promises to return, it was doubtless only because he was too busy keeping nearer girls from more immediate misery. But chagrin and loneliness had driven Odalea to solitude. She had been, as it were, snowed in. Books had been her chief companions, and she had read all sorts.

When Evert left her, she was at first as frantic as Thomas Carlyle had been when he learned that his only manuscript of "The French Revolution" was burned. They say he read nothing for six months but detective stories, devouring frantically one book of mystery and adventure after another. So Odalea read the most frivolous love-stories, the most shamelessly plotty novels, until she ran her mind to a standstill finally with works of speed, and turned for relief to more solid, or at least to heavier, fare. She read the books one is ashamed not to have read, the standard works of authors once accounted sensational but desiccated by time of any taint of freshness. She read translations of the classics, three-volume novels, sonnets and epics. Those small-town people, for lack of other distractions, sometimes get in an appalling amount of good reading.

Odalea joined a book club that maintained a circulating library of foreign periodicals, of memoirs and biographies and only the most forbidding fiction. She toiled with a culture club of the sort that metropolitan young men ridicule for deadly seriousness, because they actually study the standard works that smarter people pretend to know—and don't.

Odalea was not the only woman in Carthage who could have told you that Raphael's last name was Sanzio, and that Andrea del Sarto was supposed to be faultless in technic but lacking in spirituality, and that Luini's paintings were apt to be mistaken for Correggio's. Even Mrs. Budlong sighed with rapture over the purity of Fra Angelico's angels and knew that the plaster bas-reliefs on her wall were by Donatello. There were mothers in Carthage who had little enough money to spend but bought with some of it books on Greek sculpture, and pointed out to their children just in from playing baseball or squat-tag the difference between the styles of Phidias and Praxiteles.

Odalea found a certain drug from the pain of unrequited love in attending these clubs where very homely ladies discussed so solemnly such profane subjects as the differences between the Venuses of Melos and the Medicis. She even wrote and read an essay on Browning's infinitely wonderful "The Ring and the Book," and one on Flemish painters.

She became old-minded from disuse of her youth, until she had all but forgotten that she had ever been a girl mad to dance and dress up, and tremendously concerned about her kisses and who got them. She had kissed nobody but her father and mother for a few years that seemed a few forevers.

Then the dam dawned, and her father grew suddenly rich—



for Carthage—and her mother dragged her off to purchase new and gorgeous raiment.

Odalea had felt more embarrassed at entering a dressmaker's shop and calling for the latest styles than if she had been brought before a jury for shoplifting. After the first shock she wakened to the realization that there was something in a new hat, or a new fabric, a little more stirring than a new book of essays or a new translation of a Russian novelist whom nobody in Carthage could pronounce. For she had been reading books and forgetting the things that are back of all the books, back of the novels and love-songs, back of the grammars and dictionaries and the criticisms and histories.

She felt that she was rather old for such childish things to put on her head or her body, and that the important thing was something to put on her mind or her soul. Yet old vices are as comfortable to slip back into as old shoes, and Odalea began to buy clothes with her former gusto increased by the sensational knowledge that she could really afford to buy things. She was at least ten years younger mentally when she came out, than when she went into the fashion-shop.

When the dam-men really came and Mrs. Budlong dragged her to that first reception, Odalea looked about in dismay at the



She kept herself in till the door was closed on them, and then expressed herself with vigor.

But when she said good-night to these strange young giants whose names were all of a jumble in her head, they were aghast at the thought of her walking all the way to her house by herself. It was something unthinkable. They were used to the wilderness and real danger. If those dull Carthage streets had been lined on both sides, not with maple trees and open lawns, but with dragons, cobras, hyenas, Scyllas and Charybdises, thugs, brigands and cannibals, those engineers could not have been more horrified at Odalea's facing them alone.

To settle the matter, guarantee her safety and avoid a duel, two heroes beau'd her home. Her homeward path was not lined with wild beasts, but with girls who sat on porches and glowered at Odalea, who was triply hateful for having a new dress, two beaux and the experience of Mrs. Budlong's favor.

Odalea was in an agony all the way because she could not remember the name of either of the men. If her mother met her at the front porch, she would have to introduce her escorts. And she didn't know their names! And to ask their names would have been a hideous discourtesy. Fortunately for Odalea's sanity, her mother

bevy of girls of the younger set, whom she had thought of as children hitherto. She felt old enough now to be the mother of any of them, or all of them.

She was confused by the first men who crowded about her. She had forgotten how it felt to have a knot of men in a scrimmage to fetch your tea or pick up your fan or to dash away after another lettuce-sandwich as if it were a life-preserver on which your precious life depended. To see strong men actually elbowing one another's ribs to get in a prayer for the next dance; to be held up, during the dance, as they tried to wrest you from some other who clung to you as if you were a life-preserver—it was bewildering, terrifying.

What had once been the normal, everyday, every-party state of affairs reminded the bookish Odalea of something out of a Greek mythology, a Bacchic revel, a turmoil of satyrs around a nymph, a frieze of Centaurs carrying off Amazons. She remembered something about the Sabine women whom the Romans kidnaped, and she was not used to being Sabine.

Suddenly she was surprised to find how late it was. She must go home. For years, now, she had gone about alone or with her mother or some other stodgy woman. Nobody had fretted over her lack of accompaniment.

happened to be in the kitchen arousing a spirit of rebellion in the heart of a new cook. So Odalea bade the young men good-by without disgracing herself or them by disclosing her ignorance of their names.

One of them she liked much better than the other, but when both of them telephoned to ask her to go for a motor-ride, she accepted the first. She learned that his name was Tom Merrick and wondered which of the two he was. He turned out to be the one she had liked the less, but he also turned out to be more attractive alone, than in rivalry.

Monopoly is all that some souls want to be at their best. Others need emulation. Tom Merrick was like Ben Webb in that he was disconcerted by the presence of a competitor. But where Ben meekly withdrew from the race, Tom Merrick was a dog in the manger. So long as nobody else approached the manger, he was a good dog; but let another claimant appear, and he bristled and barked—and bit.

This Odalea could not discover until she had grown fond of him and had learned the best of him. He drove carefully and talked the sort of talk that flatters a girl. He was bookish and intellectual without being abstruse.

He had traveled in Europe and had seen the paintings and

the cathedrals that Odalea had only read about and written second-hand essays about. And so, absorbed in his contrast between the Venus of Melos as she had overawed him with her armless majesty in Paris, and the Venus of the Medicis as she had flirted with him in her marble coquetry from her pedestal in Florence, Odalea did not see Ben Webb when she passed him. And Ben mistook her delight in Tom Merrick's travelogue for delight in Tom Merrick's self.

Tom Merrick had not only read "The Ring and the Book" in a desolate camp on the Colorado River, but he had visited the very San Lorenzo Square in Florence where Browning bought the old Yellow Book of the original murder-scandal in high society, and had visited as many of the actual scenes as he could find. Odalea was as hypnotized as Browning was when he met the man who had actually seen his idol Shelley. When they returned from the ride and Odalea excused herself to rearrange her wind-blown hair and powder her chilled nose, she heard Tom Merrick wringing from the old Lail piano music that flattered the battered ivory. She loitered above to listen, and heard him crooning a captivating tune. When she went down at last and asked what it was, he told her that it was a lilt he had heard a girl in Bogotá singing near a construction camp where he had spent a weary year.

HE brought her fragments of beauty and story from lands for which she felt awe because she could not hope to see them. He did not look down on her for her small travel, but delicately implied that she was the best of everything that he had encountered in his wanderings. He applauded her opinions, drew her out and, if he found her ignorant, gave no hint of it. He was as winsome as a troubadour who sings a learned song with mastery but sends it upward as a tribute to the goddess in the window overhead.

Whenever he could escape from his office in the late afternoon, and on every evening for a week, Tom Merrick haunted Odalea and never attempted any more than the mental caress of a compliment for her intelligence, her charm or her beauty. She found him as faultless as he found her. And then Beulah Cinnamon gave a party and invited them both. Odalea accepted gladly enough, and gave the first dance to Merrick, of course. He danced, as they say, divinely.

The next she gave to that other engineer Max Creevey, who had walked home with her the night she first met Tom Merrick. He also danced divinely. He also flattered her delicately. He also was well read and traveled. What nice persons, these engineers! When the dance was over, Tom Merrick approached Odalea, and in a husky voice asked her to come out into the garden. To her stupefaction, he poured forth a blast of denunciation and promised to kill Max Creevey if he ever laid his infamous touch on her again. He promised to kill himself if she did not promise never to dance with that vile Creevey again.

Odalea had had several adventures in romance, but Tom Merrick was her first maniac. He frightened her utterly. She was afraid to go back to the party. She asked him to take her home. All the way thither, and for an hour on her porch, he revealed such misery of devotion that she could not deny him her pity. Since Max Creevey meant nothing in her life, she promised never to dance with him again. She was ready to promise never to dance with anybody again.

Merrick had no sooner won his victory over her than he became again the sweet-spoken angel. He apologized for his rage but imputed it to his intense devotion. Odalea could not know that he had nearly wrecked the lives of several other girls by this same alternation of saintliness and diabolic greed. But he had frightened her so badly that he saved her just in time from letting the fascination of his chatter and his gallantry in solitude develop into love.

After this outburst, when he put his arms about her to beg her forgiveness, she slipped out of his clasp and forgave him across the back of a chair. When he begged her for a good-night kiss, she let him have the back of her hand and at the full length of her arm. When the next invitation came and Tom Merrick asked her to go with him, she had a headache.

Sometimes when Tom Merrick was calling on her, people would drop in to call—a girl with her fellow, or some lonely engineer who was left stranded by the overplus of men. At once Tom Merrick would throw off the mask of *Doctor Jekyll* and play *Mr. Hyde*. So Odalea left word with her mother and the cook that she was not at home if anybody called when Tom Merrick happened to be there. And this caused some pretty embarrassments when Tom was singing or playing piano duets with Odalea, and

visitors were sent away from the front door with the statement that Odalea was out.

Tom was so interesting when they were alone, so repentant of his tempers, that she could not bring herself to hate him, though she grew farther and farther from any thought of loving him. He excited her most perplexed and difficult sympathies. Even his meanest humors were so plainly painful to him that it was hard to withhold forgiveness. Yet it was hard to have to forgive so much so often.

Merrick was one of those poor misbegotten souls that long only for what is denied them. In his cradle he had shown himself capable of the passions of a wildcat. He threw overboard the rattles and milk bottles and all his pretty toys, and screamed with frenzy for the sharp knife, the scissors and the box of matches that he must not have. He went through life pursuing people who were afraid of him, and avoiding people who were not. Being a man who changed his parish often, he had gone through a succession of new loves in new scenes, all of them disasters. He had driven girls of all ages into hysterics and flight. He had brought down several newspaper scandals upon the heads of peaceable young women who were willing to do almost anything to please him except to marry him.

And now he was in Carthage for two years or so, and had fastened his mad love on poor Odalea!

Her sympathy was compelled, for she could see that her lover was really wretched and helpless in his fumes of jealousy. She had only to smile at a man to start the fireworks. Walking along the street once with Tom Merrick, she encountered Ben Webb and gave him one of her sweetest greetings—a far sweeter one than she knew.

"And who's all that?" flared Tom.

"Oh, just an old friend."

"An old sweetheart, you mean!"

"Well, I was fond of him once."

"I'll bet you were—and still are. God, the look you gave him! And he looked at you as if he owned you. Did you ever kiss him?"

"Such a question! Good heavens, can't I speak to a man I've known ever since we were children."

"Did—you—ever—kiss him?"

"Yes!"

"Oh, my God!" He clutched at his brow and knocked his hat off—stepped on it as he snatched at it, put it on hindsides before and didn't care. "Oh, my God, that beast has defiled the lips that you would not let me touch. Oh, my God! I'll go back and kill him. What's his name?"

She steered him up a side-street to get him away from the attention he was attracting. She managed to calm him by promising never to speak to Ben Webb again. She would have promised never to speak to her own father again.

She grew so afraid of him that she would not go out with him. She felt it safer to keep him at home. People began to talk, of course. Tom Merrick's car—all the engineers had their cars, and they were all as well known as their owners—was always outside Odalea's house except when she was in it and riding about with him, seeing nobody. She looked as if she were infatuated with him, so she must be.

She was as infatuated as if she held a rattlesnake behind the ears and dared not let go. But who was to guess that?

Chapter Twenty-seven

WHILE Mrs. Budlong's chief interest in life was dealing in young romance and finding the exactly right mates for as many of the engineers as she could manage, she did not neglect her other and older duties as the queen of adult society. Many of the engineers were men of eminence and means, and some of them had brought with them wives who were evidently ladies—in the Eastern sense. Then, of course, there was Ian Craigie, the generalissimo of the whole army. She could not let him fall into other hands.

So she prepared a great dinner at which he was to be guest of honor. She had read that in New York invitations by telephone were more fashionable than written formalities. So she managed to land on Ian Craigie's ear one day when he was engaged in a conference with a dozen of his lieutenants.

He remembered her at once from Ben Webb's description of her as the grandest dame in Carthage, when she sang across the wire:

"I want you to come to me to (Continued on page 114)



The Customs of the Country

Illustrated by
John Held, Jr.

By

Robert C. Benchley

One wonders just how many Americans returning from European travels have had Customs adventures similar to the extraordinary experience undergone by the occasionally homicidal Mr. Peters as recorded in the quaint but veracious chronicle which follows. Or is our canny Mr. Benchley taking pains to smooth the way in advance for his own return at a later date?

MR. AND MRS. PETERS (the Walter Peterses, that is, of Dyke, Ohio,) sat in their stateroom on the fairly good ship *Reenland*. Between them was that amorphous adjunct to nautical furnishings which is sometimes a wash-basin and sometimes a writing-desk—to be exact, a writing-desk when you want a wash-basin and a wash-basin when you want a writing-desk. The need of the moment having been for a writing-desk, Mr. Peters had three times in succession let down the basin, finally compromising by washing his hands anyway.

On the writing-desk which had at last been manipulated into coming out of its cubbyhole lay a large sheet of paper over which Mr. Peters was bending, every pore dilated. He was evidently going through that gigantic American ordeal of "filling out" something.

"How much did that gadget cost that you got for Martha?" he asked. "That thing that looks like a tea-caddy."

"That's a shawl," replied Mrs. Peters quietly, "and a very pretty one."

"If I put down 'shawl,' they'll never recognize it, and we'll be arrested. Better let me call it a 'tea-caddy' just to help the Customs man out. He'll be pretty busy that morning. . . . And what did you say it cost?"

Mrs. Peters was figuring. "Twelve hundred francs," she mumbled to herself. "That's—twenty-four goes into twelve hundred five times and nothing to carry—and three is six—"

"Call it fifty dollars," said Mr. Peters. "You are allowed a hundred dollars' worth free of duty, and this makes you a hundred and twenty dollars. Call it twenty-five dollars."

"Why, Walter!" exclaimed his wife.

"Why, Walter yourself!" was the quick if uninspired retort. "It isn't worth fifteen. And besides—" Here Mr. Peters muttered something seditious about the Government of his homeland, the homeland to which he was returning at an average speed of eighteen knots an hour. At the beginning of the run he had been pretty fairly enthusiastic at the thought of reaching America once more, in spite of the Americans he had met in Europe. But



"Oh, Walter!" exclaimed his wife. "We forgot the pocketbooks for the girls!"

"My God,"—and the little man's taut nerves sang out at the blow,—
"do you mean to say that I've got to erase all this and put those in? Can't you hide them in your underclothes?"

"Don't be vulgar, Walter," said Mrs. Peters. "They cost ten dollars apiece, and if the man should look—"

"I'd like to see him try; that's all," growled her knight-errant. But with all his bluster, he crouched down over the desk and erased his neat little figures, smooching the page beyond repair and superimposing new figures which blurred as if they had grown fur.

"Let me get this all added up again," he said, "and then remember something else. We've got two days before we land."

But in his mind there arose a vision of the encounter with the Customs official, already his mortal enemy. It was not often that Mr. Peters laid plans ahead for his intimate little murders. He was

usually content to sit tight and let Nature take its course, for killing was not really in his line, and if he could rid himself of a pest without bloodshed, no one was more glad than he was, unless perhaps it was Mrs. Peters. But as he ran over in his mind what he was going to say to the inspector on the day when he stood face to face with the Department of Internal Revenue of the United States of America, he felt that before nightfall

from the day when the Customs blanks were handed out, his patriotism had been on the wane. As he sat and looked at the regulations on the back of the blank, he envisaged his Government as a Mean Old Thing, sitting astride the pier in New York with greedy talons outstretched and suspicious eyes following his every move. And what was worse than his defection from one-hundred-per-cent Americanism, Mr. Peters wavered in his allegiance to the Republican Party. All his life he had been regular. He had voted for a high protective tariff on principle. He had even spoken tenderly of our "infant industries," and the dumping of foreign goods on our markets had been to him something to be mentioned in the same category with cutting up little children. And now the protective tariff had turned and bitten the hand that had so often fed it votes.

"Do you mean to tell me," he said, "that I have to pay duty on these paper-covered novels I bought to read on the train?"

"They may not let you take those in at all," said Mrs. Peters. "That man in the library this morning said that his cousin had to leave a whole load of them on the pier last summer."

"What do they think you're going to do with them—boil them down and drink them when you get home? I'd like to see them try to keep me from taking them in." And Mr. Peters looked about him to see if he had been overheard. He understood that there were often Government spies on board.

"Now, Walter, don't do anything rash," protested his wife. "You don't want to get into the papers."

"Papers or no papers," said Mr. Peters viciously, "I am not going to declare these neckties. I'm going to say that I bought them in America before I sailed."

"It would be against the law to make ties like that in America," said Mrs. Peters. "They could tell in a minute."

Mr. Peters added up the list of their purchases in silence. He was rather proud of his neat figures and held the sheet off at arm's-length to survey it.

"I ought to get a B for neatness, anyway," he said. "But if they—"



he would hear the Great Call to spill blood in the cause of the Right. And he resolved to be ready.

"I guess those inspectors are pretty tough guys," he said to Mrs. Peters.

"Well, I wouldn't worry about it, Walter," replied his wife. "If we tell the truth, we shouldn't have any trouble."

"No? Why, I understand that sometimes they just turn your trunk inside out and throw things all over the pier. Then you have to pack it all up yourself."

"I don't think they'd do that, would they?" Mrs. Peters detected the belligerent advances of her husband, and dreaded the outcome if he were allowed to nurse his venom all the way into port.

"If he gets nasty to me, I won't be responsible, you know." Mr. Peters looked at the back of his hand reminiscently.

"I know, Walter, I know. Only I wouldn't borrow trouble if I were you."

But Mr. Peters was bent on borrowing trouble, and his credit was good in that market. He borrowed up to the hilt, at six per cent. Holding in his hand the messy declaration-blank, he rehearsed the scene on the pier. . . .

The inspector of his dreams was a mean, squinty-eyed person, a little shorter than Mr. Peters (dream antagonists should always be just a little shorter, in case it becomes necessary to use force), but vicious and very insulting. He would take an instinctive dislike to Mr. Peters. Mr. Peters had taken an instinctive dislike to him as far out as Nantucket lightship.

"Is this all you bought?" the inspector would say.

"Yes, it is, and do you want to make anything out of it?" would be Mr. Peters' retort. Give those people the initial advantage and you are lost.

"Open up that trunk."

At this Mr. Peters would concede a point and open the trunk.

"What's in that bundle there?" (Mrs. Peters had bought a very chaste statuette which had been kept in its original package against breakage.)

"Just a little piece of statuary."

"Yeah? Just a little piece of statuary, eh? Sure it aint just a little quart of Scotch? Come on, come on! Open it



up and let's take a look at it. I aint seen any statuary for a long time."

At this Mr. Peters would be very calm.

"I tell you that it's just a little statue, and it is very hard to wrap up again. I had much rather not undo it."

"Say, what are you trying to hand me? Come on, snap into it, snap into it! And take that necktie off; I don't like it."

Mr. Peters couldn't decide whether to draw the gun on him at the tie remark or to maintain his dignified calm and undo the package. The inspector's chagrin at finding that it really *was* a little statue and not contraband liquor might be satisfying to watch. The shooting could come later.

At this point the man would probably turn his attention to Mrs. Peters.

"Come on, old lady," he would say, "what have you got strapped around your waist? That can't all be *you* in there."

"I'll trouble you to speak more politely to my wife," Mr. Peters would say. And as he came to this phase of his daydream, his palms became moist and his face grew red. Now would be the time. He couldn't wait any longer. Reaching in his side pocket, he would fire through the coat as he had so often done in past killings, and as the inspector fell dead at his feet, he would kick him aside, lock the trunk and call a cab.

"What on earth is the matter with you, Walter?" asked Mrs. Peters. "Your eyes are popping out."

"I was just thinking, my dear, just wool-gathering."

And Mr. Peters walked over and kissed his wife, which so surprised her that she toppled back onto the writing-desk, bringing down the wash-basin. . . .

It was early morning when the *Reenland* steamed up the Narrows, and the passengers were all on deck to catch first sight of the Statue of Liberty. They were dressed in "landing clothes," which meant that they were quite unrecog- (Continued on page 121)




Illustrated by
T. D. Skidmore

ELSA BARKER found the germ of the present story in stains on the mantel in her own living-room in New York—stains that could not be removed, and the cause of which could not be determined. From such acorns of experience grow oaks of detective stories—when they are cared for and tended by writers of Elsa Barker's inventive talent.

By

Elsa Barker



The detective reached for that big revolver on the desk and put it into his pocket.

The Stains on the Mantel

DEXTER DRAKE says that the solving of almost every crime mystery depends upon something which seems, at the first glance, to bear *no relation whatever* to the original crime.

Now, I know a lot more about football than I know about my friend's methods of detection; but there was certainly something very peculiar in the way events fell out in that case of the Stains on the Mantel.

If I had not crossed the Atlantic in the same cabin with Dexter Drake, and been useful to him in a matter he was investigating on the ship, I suppose I should not have had the luck—inconceivable luck for a fellow of twenty-two—of being on intimate terms with a man whom the heads of police in several countries regard as the cleverest free-lance crime specialist in the world.

One morning—it was the eighth of July—when I called at his place, his old servant Patchen said to me as he opened the door: "Mr. Drake is not busy—you can go right down to the study, sir."

The assistant-sleuth-butler preceded me down the corridor to that little room at the end, lined with books and filing-cases, which contained the records of innumerable crimes in many lands and languages.

"Mr. Paul Howard, sir."

The detective was reading a newspaper. On the desk before him was one lovely pink rose in a crystal vase—and a big revolver. I caught my breath at their juxtaposition; it was so characteristic of Drake, the imaginative dreamer, the worker in ugly realities.

His lifted aquiline face brightened. He was on his feet in an instant, tall and lithe, holding out his slender brown hand to me.

He motioned me to the easy chair beside his desk.

"If you had arrived a few minutes earlier," he said, "you would have met my friend Inspector Sorby. But Sorby is rather pensive this morning. He's been working more than two weeks on that safe-blowing case in old Capron's house on Riverside Drive, and making no progress whatever. He took the case over after Detective Malden was killed in an automobile accident.

Detective Delmar helped him for a few days; now Sorby is going it alone. But already he's beginning to wonder, down in his heart, if it isn't one of those problems too stubborn for the professional sleuth—the kind, you know, which only the annoying amateur can solve."

Under the lightness and humor, the air of the world which Drake reverted to in his leisure moments, I could see that his restless mind was on the stretch.

"Last week," he said, "I disposed of two cases; but you find me this morning with a clean slate. I'm reminded of what the ex-convict Blackman, now reformed and keeping a respectable rooming-house for men, told a policeman who congratulated him on his present life—that it was certainly peaceful, but it didn't seem to lead to anything."

The incomparable Patchen reappeared in the doorway. His old blue eyes with the baggy under-lids were bright with interest.

"A gentleman, sir, on the other telephone in the front hall—a young gentleman, by the voice. He seems rather excited."

With a hurried, "Excuse me," the insouciant idler of a moment before moved up the corridor with the flowing lightness of a panther on the trail of its natural prey.

In two minutes he was back again, but he did not sit down. "Tell me, Paul, how would you feel if you had been called out last night by a bogus message from some one who said she

was Gertrude, though you didn't know any Gertrude and went out of sheer curiosity, found no one there, but on your return to your rooms you had found—on the ivory-white paint of your carved-wood mantel—bloodstains, bloodstains still wet and glistening?"

"W-why, I should feel that the matter called for investigation."

"That's what my new client feels. He says he didn't tell anybody—just lay awake all night imagining horrors. This morning he sent away his charwoman with some excuse. He lives alone in Gramercy Park. Do you want to go down there with me?"

"Of course I do. And what a queer case!"

Drake called a taxi, and a few minutes later we swung round that lovely old-fashioned square where his new client lived, and stopped before a small apartment-house.

There seemed to be only one man in attendance, an oldish and very black negro in green livery who ran the elevator.

The car stopped at the second floor with several unsteady jerks.

"You're a new man, aren't you?" the detective asked the attendant.

"Ves'r. Ah come las' Friday. Mistuh Needham, he's Two C, las' door on yuh lef' down that li'l hall."

Drake had been observing everything, outside the house and in.



The Inspector came in, with a young policeman in uniform. Then I watched the formalities of an arrest.

"Why, anybody could come in here, Howard, when the elevator is at the top of the house, run up those stairs there, and get away again without being seen."

He rang the bell of Apartment Two C, and the door was opened by a small straw-colored young man in a very well-cut gray suit.

The young man closed the door cautiously behind us before he said a word. Then he shook hands with us both. He had a moist hand which trembled a little. His skin was so yellow that his little straw-colored mustache hardly showed. Lack of exercise, small independent means, not enough to do—I could almost hear the detective's quick summary. Needham's mouth was a thin, waving line, and his gray-blue eyes had a nearsighted squint which gave him an inquisitive expression. Yes, curiosity would have led him out last night. But he was obviously a gentleman.

"I heard of you, Mr. Drake," he said, "from a friend of mine whom you cleared of a dark suspicion."

"All sorts of cases are brought to me," the great detective answered.

We were in a small sitting-room with cream-white walls and woodwork, good rugs and pictures. And there before us was that cream-white mantel of carved wood! It had an ornamental upper part, a mirror, brackets and other excrescences—you know the sort of thing. And at each end was a short fluted column, surmounted by a carved pineapple.

Drake went over and stood before it.

"Dates from the artless eighteen-eighties, I should say. You see, it is really an overmantel. Some former tenant must have had it put on. No doubt it was here when the two private houses were turned into apartments, and the large rooms cut up into small ones."

But Needham was pointing excitedly to the carved pineapple at the right end of the mantel. "See the stains of blood on the apple? They dried overnight, of course—"

Yes, the bloodstains shrieked at us from the white paint.

"Ah, finger-prints, but blurred by those jagged points of the pineapple! Unreadable—and no prints on the column. I shall just take a sample of this blood, though." Drake took out his pocket-knife, and began to scrape. "Ah—I see—there's a dark-brown stain under the white paint."

"Yes, I had the rooms all done over before I moved in, July first. I don't like brown woodwork—unless, of course, it's real old oak. I took over the lease from a lady who wanted to live farther uptown."

Drake turned suddenly, his black eyes glittering.

"And where did the lady go?"

"She moved to the Hotel Majestic, Central Park West."

"Maiden lady—widow—married—"

"Husband dead a long time—so her lawyer told me; but she's still youngish, a pretty little woman. She had answered my advertisement for a bachelor apartment. I saw her only once, when I came first to look at the rooms. The lawyer arranged everything about the lease."

My friend examined the carpet, and the spring lock on the door. Then we went into the next room, a bedroom behind folding doors. There was a bathroom beyond—but that was all.

"Did she live here alone?"

"I don't know."

Drake asked the young man how many keys he had. Two. Did he entrust one key to his charwoman? No. Did the owners of the building have a key? They had told him no. Had he ever lent his key? No.

Drake went back to the mantel. He rapped on it here and there, on the fluted columns, on the carved pineapples.

"And now," he said, "will you tell me again about Gertrude?"

Needham asked us to sit down. Then, seating himself in a stiff high-backed chair, he assumed a very dignified, unsmiling manner.

"Last night," he said, "at half-past eight, the telephone rang. A high-pitched voice said: 'Is this Mr. Needham?' I said it was. 'I'm Gertrude—Gertrude, you know.' I didn't know any girl by that name, and I told her so. 'But you'll remember when you see me,' she said. 'If you'll come out right now, this minute, I'll meet you on the other side of the park, outside the railing. I've something wonderful to tell you.' I went—but there wasn't



anybody there. After waiting twenty minutes, I came home—and found those bloodstains, all wet."

Needham said he had turned off the light when he went out, that he had been standing nearly all the time facing his own window across the park, and no light had appeared there.

"So whatever was done here was done in the dark," he said.

To my mind the whole thing looked decidedly sinister.

"Do you think," Needham asked, in a voice which he could not keep steady, "that it's some criminal attack on me—black-mail, maybe? I'm not a rich man now; but my family, you know—"

"The case, so far," Drake answered, "opens rather a wide field for speculation."

It certainly did.

"Those stains," Needham said, "look to me as if they were made by a bloody hand. But if some one had been murdered here and the body carried away,—maybe down the fire-escape,—there would surely be blood on the floor, or the couch, or— or somewhere, not just on the mantel." His teeth were chattering.

"But you mustn't take it like that," Drake said cheerily. "You



It was a bombshell. With a leap from the sofa the boy threw himself upon Drake.

really mustn't. This isn't a murder case. It's—it's something else."

Then he asked the young man if he had any turpentine. No, he hadn't. Would he mind running round to Third Avenue and buying a small bottle? Of course he wouldn't mind going.

Little Needham rushed off on his errand, leaving us alone there.

"He's all right," was Drake's comment. "But now I must work quickly, Howard. There isn't a moment to lose."

He whipped out his knife again, rushed to the mantel, and began running the knife-blade round the base of that stained pineapple.

"What in the world are you doing?" I asked him.

"But didn't you hear a difference in the sound of those two columns when I rapped on them? There's a hollow. . . ."

He was twisting the carved ornament gently between his hands.

"It's turning," he whispered. "I've loosened it with the knife. It was that fresh coat of paint which prevented its turning before—last night, I mean, when the attempt was made."

The pineapple was off now; he was peering into the column.

"There's a paper there, a rolled white paper!"

Moistening his little finger, he carefully drew it forth. Then he screwed back the pineapple at the top of the fluted column.

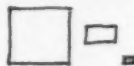
Drake was unrolling a half-sheet of rather stiff letter-paper, and we stood there in the middle of the room examining it together.

"Typewritten!" I exclaimed. "But those queer designs there? Whatever does it mean, Dexter Drake?"

At the right-hand upper corner of the sheet was a penciled note, "*Grand Cent. Sta. June 20, 8 A. M., 1925.*"

"That's a postmark memorandum, of course," Drake said.

Here is what was typewritten and drawn on the paper:



1/2 3 Southern Negroes.

Cook's "all right."

423222711



"The word *negroes* is misspelled," I observed.

Drake was staring at the paper—fascinated. As I laid my hand on his arm, I could feel that every muscle of his body was tense.

"There's some villainy behind this," he muttered. "I sent that young man to Third Avenue to get him out of the way for a few minutes. I don't dare to confide in him yet. This may be a big case."

As we heard a key rattle in the lock, he slipped the cryptograph letter into his pocket. Needham came in, breathing quickly, as if he had run up the stairs. He held out a small bottle to Drake; then he went to get a cloth. In using turpentine on those blood-stains instead of water, the detective managed to blur the marks of his knife round the edge of the secret hiding-place; but he suggested that Needham buy a little cream-white the next time he was out and paint over the marred pineapple himself. "And tell no one," he said, "—no one."

Before leaving, he asked for a card of introduction to the lady from whom those rooms had been subleased. He wanted to ask her a few questions about them. She had rather a pretentious, alliterative name, Mrs. Alexander Marmaduke Malden; but I had learned on shipboard that the formidable Dexter Drake could be a charmer of ladies when he chose to be.

"But do you think,"—Needham hesitated,—"that I am in—danger here?"

"I really do not. But if you *should* hear some one in your rooms at night, keep perfectly still—just pretend to be asleep."

SHE was a little woman, a pretty woman, very blonde, very daintily dressed in gray; but as she opened the door of her suite in the Hotel Majestic—Drake had spoken with her first over the house-telephone and given her a hint of our errand—she seemed prettily anxious.

"I do hope," she said, as she seated us in her small salon, "that your client is not dissatisfied with my little nest down there."

So she had assumed that Drake was a lawyer—naturally.

"Of course it's old-fashioned," she ran on, "but he seemed to like it." Her rather flirtatious blue eyes were playing back and forth between our faces. "And for a young man like him—"

The deference, the masterful charm of my friend's manner, would have drawn information from the lips of a mummy—a feminine mummy.

"I hope you will pardon the intrusion, madam," he was saying, "but would you tell me if you were disturbed, annoyed in any way, during the last few days you spent in those rooms in Gramercy Park?"

"Disturbed? Annoyed?" Her round blue eyes grew rounder, bluer. "Why—why, no. I—I don't know what you mean."

"Are you certain that no one tried to enter the place at night, with a duplicate key or—otherwise?"

She flushed. "No one tried to enter."

"And the date when you moved out of those rooms was—"

"June 26th. That left a few days for the papering and painting, as Mr. Needham insisted on taking possession the first of July. He didn't want brown woodwork."

"Wasn't there a third key? There generally is, with a spring lock."

"Why,"—a pucker came between her brows,—"*there was* another key, but I lost it. I forget when—perhaps my little boy will remember."

She glanced toward the open door of a bedroom beyond. "Tommy, darling," she called, "come out here."

"Yes, Mother," a clear voice came from the other room; then a handsome boy with chestnut hair, eleven or twelve years old maybe, was standing in the doorway.

"What is it, Mother?"

"When did I lose that key of the old place in Gramercy Park?"

"Why, don't you remember? It was right after Easter."

"Yes, yes, I do remember now, and how we hunted for it all over the place, and the negro on the elevator hunted in the hall downstairs. Come and be introduced to these gentlemen."

Gracefully, rather shyly, the boy came forward, and as Drake rose to shake hands with him, I did the same.

"My son Thomas." The little mother patted a hassock by her side, and the boy sat down facing us. He had clear light-brown eyes and strong features. There was character in that young face.

"Tommy,"—Drake spoke precisely as he would have spoken to another man, not with that patronage which children resent in strangers,—"*did you notice anybody hanging around the place during the last few days you were in Gramercy Park?*"

"No sir."

"Tommy wasn't there during the last few days," the mother said. "He went out to my sister's place in New Jersey the 21st of June."

So she *had* been there alone for several days—and right after the 20th of June, the penciled date on that hidden paper!

"Did you ever lend your key to anybody?" Drake asked the boy.

"Never, sir."

"He didn't have one of his own, of course," the mother explained; "he's still too young. We took our lunches and dinners out; but the woman who came to do the morning work never had a key. You don't suppose that negro—" She was twisting the jeweled rings on her fingers. "Oh, I really think, Mr. Drake, the simplest way to set Mr. Needham's mind at rest is for me to buy him another lock!"

My friend agreed with her, thanked her.

Then he rose, bowed from the waist over the hand she extended, and shook hands with the boy again.

AS we stood below on the pavement, waiting for a free taxi, he said: "What do you think of her, Howard?"

"Oh, she's a nice little woman. Very flirtatious, though—very. I'll wager she has a train of men friends, that she lunches and dines with them too—and without the boy. But she can't possibly know what she left behind her there, or she wouldn't have left it. Perhaps some man friend of hers hid that paper in her mantelpiece, not knowing she was going to move."

Drake nodded, then raised his stick to signal a passing cab.

He told me then that he had invited Inspector Sorby to lunch with him at Cavanagh's. Wouldn't I like to come along?

As our cab rolled southward, he took the cryptograph letter from his pocket and sat studying it.

"That safe robbery of Sorby's," he said, "was on the night of June 19th, and this paper in my hand was mailed the next morning. Little Needham has been the innocent custodian of a criminal memorandum, if I read these symbols aright."

"You don't mean," I cried, "that you can *read* that thing?"

His dark bright eyes opened wide at me. "But how else should I think it was a criminal memorandum? Oh, the dates alone would have piqued my curiosity; but there's more to it—much more. This afternoon, when Sorby leaves us, I'm going on an expedition of discovery."

I caught my breath. "And will you take me with you?"

"No, Howard. It may be dangerous—I'm not sure. I shall take my case-hardened old Patchen. If Smalley is known there—"

"Smalley?" I echoed. "Who is Smalley?"

"That remains to be seen. I think he's a safe-blower."

The blonde widow—her mantelpiece—a safe-blower—my second case with Dexter Drake was growing more exciting every minute. Of course "Gertrude" was only used as a lure to get Needham out of the place. But whoever was balked last night when he tore his hands on the jagged points of that pineapple, wouldn't he surely come back, maybe chloroform Needham next time, if he were desperate enough?

The detective leaned forward and told the taxi-driver to take us to Police Headquarters. But he left me waiting in the cab outside the building. When he came out, he was alone.

"But where is Inspector Sorby?" I asked in surprise.

"Oh, he promised to meet me at Cavanagh's at one o'clock."

Then what had Drake been doing at Police Headquarters?

"Not a word to the Inspector," he said, "about Needham and the blood on his mantel. I have first to prove that I'm right."

CONTRAST? I never knew two men engaged in similar work who were more unlike than Drake and the Police Inspector who joined us at the restaurant. We had just found a table when I saw coming down the room, a burly man—not tall, not more than five feet eight, but clumsy and slow-moving. He had large, irregular features, a fleshy beardless face, without lines and yet somehow not youthful. His way of carrying his head, with the chin low down in his collar, gave him a defensive look. I glanced round at the uplifted aquiline face beside me—yes, that was the profile of attack, not of defense. Whole racial and psychological worlds apart were those two men, those two detectives.

I liked Sorby, though, liked the downright grip of his hand. His gray eyes looked straight into mine, and they were true eyes.

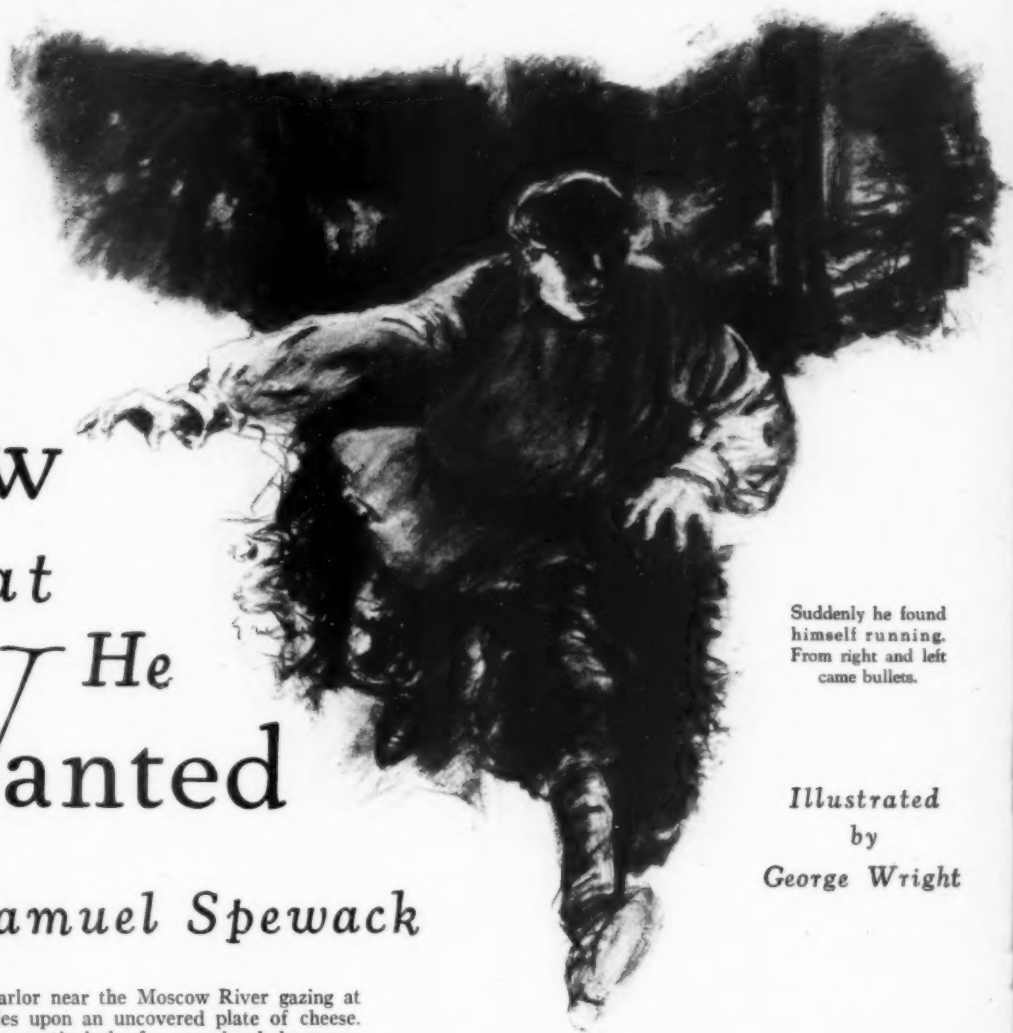
Drake had said to me once of his friend the Inspector: "He admires me immensely, resents me a little—doesn't know just where to place me. But he's my best friend among the regulars."

When the waiter had taken his order (Continued on page 102)

A lot has been said in these notes relative to the authenticity of this magazine's fiction. The present is a case in point. The author is one of the best known correspondents in Europe, and there's but little doubt that the present is a true story—at least in spirit, for Mr. Spewack knows whereof he writes.

He Knew What W He Wanted

By Samuel Spewack



Suddenly he found
himself running.
From right and left
came bullets.

Illustrated
by
George Wright

SERGEI sat in a beer parlor near the Moscow River gazing at a group of buzzing flies upon an uncovered plate of cheese. It was a fascinating study, particularly for a melancholy man.

He should have been the happiest gypsy in all Russia. He had a permanent job at the Little Yar cabaret, and the new rich were as generous in their calculating way as the princes had been in their prodigal spendthrift gestures.

And last week he had pulled out (with the aid of that scoundrel Ivan Borosovitch) a fine back tooth that had been keeping him awake.

So, putting one and one together, Sergei reflected, his eye drowsily magnifying a particularly fat fly on the southeast corner of the cheese, he had wealth and health.

And then he had his guitar.

At the thought of his guitar, Sergei sat up and ordered another beer. He had already consumed two beers and twelve pretzels, but any gypsy in the colony would have toasted Sergei's guitar—no, not just with beer, but with champagne, ordered by grateful and slightly intoxicated listeners.

Five hundred gold rubles had been offered for that guitar—in the old days; but Sergei, then a mere stripling, had not only refused the offer but had laughed in the face of Kiev's greatest horse-breeder.

As Sergei gulped his beer, his eyes shut, a vision of his beloved guitar came to him, black and shining, with red and green and bright blue ribbons hanging from her neck. Now she was asleep in her flannel bag on his rickety table in the room which he

shared with that young thief Ivan Borosovitch. On his return, she would greet him with her startlingly mellow voice, and she would spin out for him many dreams.

She—Sergei caught himself up with a gasp. For instead of the guitar, the vision was now the face of a woman, a broad, high face with eyes as black as the guitar, and cheeks as red as its ribbon. It was a sad, reproachful face, and looked very much like that of Douna Palatova.

The cheerfulness which had begun to envelop Sergei suddenly dropped away. Scowling, he sought to bring back the vision of his guitar, but the face of Douna Palatova would not be driven away.

Sergei bawled for another beer.

There was no work for him that night. It was a Communist holiday, and in the cheerful manner of radicals, the evening was to be spent in speech-making and denunciation of the unhappy capitalistic world. So he commanded still another beer from the black-whiskered villain who served him, and lit a cigarette.

"Why," he asked the waiter reflectively, "don't you wash your face?"

"My beard is black," said the waiter, for he hated war.

"If I wanted to, I could lift you with one hand and throw you into the river."

"It is not impossible," admitted the black-bearded man of peace. "Bah! The bill."

Sergei was strongly tempted to hurl the cheese against the bushy landscape of the pacifist, but he remembered in time that his last athletic impulse had cost him a night in prison. So he hurried out into the twilight and walked across the bridge, where he came upon three *isvochtiks*, who sat up and earnestly competed for his custom with threats, compliments and insults.

A fourth carriage raced forward. Its horse had a blanket of red, green and blue stripes. Sergei stepped in. By fixing his eyes upon the blanket whose colors reminded him of the ribbons around the neck of his beloved guitar, he would throw out the vision of that sad, reproachful face.

"To Balavaya," he ordered.

"It is two hours," the driver reminded him with a servile smile.

"Don't I know it, fool?" returned Sergei, his spirits picking up with the chances of a fight.

"Very well," was all that the driver replied; and Sergei, saddened beyond measure, sank back against the leather seat, and into a coma of which the Russians are such consummate masters.

FOR an hour the coma obligingly persisted, and then, aided by the dispersing of the beer-fumes, it vanished. Sergei unashamedly buried his head in his hands and gave himself up to a brief address to the face of Douna Palatova:

"How was I to know that I loved you, Douna *milinka*?" he argued. "For five years we lived side by side, but never once did it occur to me that I loved you. But now, Douna *milinka*, now that you have gone to America, now that I shall never see you again, I love you."

The face, as if satisfied, suddenly disappeared, but Sergei continued to brood on the gypsy girl. What a fool he had been! When he might have been wooing her, in the intervals at the cabaret where she had sung to his guitar accompaniment, he had entertained her with his own original maxims such as:

"Never swap a horse for a fickle female. A horse kicks but never bites."

His *isvochtik* drew up before the low, flat cottages where the gypsies lived in common if not exactly cooperative style.

Sergei threw the fellow a wad of million notes with a gesture that implied: "Go buy yourself chinchilla garters, but don't annoy me with your thanks."

The carriage rattled off, and Sergei turned around to look straight into the eyes of Geberanova, the soprano—if one can look straight into cross eyes.

"Damn the woman! She's always meeting me," thought Sergei, and scowled.

"Spare your smiles, Sergei Fodorovitch," the soprano sneered. "You'll be needing them soon."

"Where are the rest?" interrupted Sergei. He was in no mood to talk to the cross-eyed soprano.

"They've all gone off. A fool at an embassy sent for them for his banquet."

"Ivan Borosovitch too?"

Receiving no answer but just an enigmatic smile, Sergei flung himself into his room. He wanted Ivan Borosovitch, because the wretch owed him money, and Sergei with that grand gesture had given the cabman all he had in paper rubles.

"*Praklati!*" he swore, which is just the Russian, "The devil!" although it sounds more promising.

The oath died on his lips as his eyes took in the confusion of his room. Only the toothbrush, which a foreigner had given him, still hung on the wall. Everything else was upset—his bed, the only easy chair, his two shelves, his extra pants with pockets turned inside out; and even his pillow had been ripped open.

Sergei automatically set the table on its rickety legs and just as automatically looked for his guitar in its flannel bag to place on the table.

But there was no guitar!

NERVELESSLY he felt the wood of the table as if expecting the soft jangle of disturbed strings that always met him when he touched the covered guitar. Then he rushed out on the landing and shouted.

"*Chort!*" he bellowed. "Damnation, but my guitar is gone. Some one has stolen my guitar!"

No running feet, no curious chatter answered his call.

Only the cross-eyed soprano, with her fiendish smile, stood at the foot of the wooden stairs.

"Stop screaming!" she ordered contemptuously. "I could have told you as much. Ivan Borosovitch has stolen your guitar."

"Ivan Borosovitch!" echoed Sergei stupidly.

"Yes. And what's more, he's gone to America."

"With my guitar!"

"With your guitar! You can whistle for it now."

Sergei stumbled back into his room. Feverishly he waved his blanket about like a banner in the wind. Then he dropped it suddenly, to fall on his hands and knees; and crawling about the room like an animal, he looked again. But his guitar was gone.

Ivan Borosovitch had stolen it and taken it to America.

Sergei lifted his hands to heaven, but his curses were of hell.

And then he stopped and went to a corner of the room and lifted a plank of wood from the floor. Without bothering to count the gold rubles within the bag, Sergei thought bitterly of the scoundrel Ivan who, failing to find Sergei's gold, had fled with his guitar.

"He could have had all my gold, if only he had left me my guitar," sighed Sergei. And pinning the gold securely within his shirt, he ran from the cottage.

"Where are you going?" shouted the cross-eyed soprano.

"To America," Sergei called back.

"But it will take you months. Ivan Borosovitch has had his visé for a long time."

"Oh, go sing off key," might be the Boston translation of what Sergei shouted to the cross-eyed soprano.

To leave Russia for any foreign country, Sergei knew, necessitated a visé, a stamp upon his passport. Douna Palatova had one. And she had waited three months for hers. That breath of the devil, Ivan Borosovitch, Sergei knew, had applied for his six or seven weeks ago.

No! Sergei could not wait three months for a mere stamp on his passport, with the thief already on his way to America with the guitar.

He would have to take the alternative—that of slinking across the border like a smuggler past Red soldiers who, Sergei had heard, are instructed to shoot first and ask questions afterward.

At a *traktir* he invested in bread, onions, six cold meat-balls and two bottles of beer. These carefully wrapped up in a small burlap bag, he hurried to the railway station. If there was a train going his way, he would take it. If not, he would wait.

Sergei did not have to wait.

"The angels need a good guitar-player," the gypsy noted grimly, and got into a fourth-class car, where he proceeded to make himself comfortable with eight others in an airtight compartment. For four days and three nights, he rode.

ON the fourth night, some twenty miles from the Lettish border, the train made a forced stop for some slight repairs. Sergei got off with the other men to offer suggestions, but absent-mindedly neglected to return with them to his compartment. Hidden behind the rude waiting-station, he watched the train out of sight. In four days and nights, one can get very much attached to a train. But no sentimental reason prompted Sergei to give the speeding train a mute, watchful farewell. The train spread too much light, and with its whistling and hooting always wakened sleepy policemen and lovesick soldiers.

A half-hour later, Sergei struck across the road and into the forest. The sun rose, and Sergei breakfasted on one onion, one meat-ball, one slice of bread and three swigs of beer, and continued his walk. At noon he met a peasant who was enraged with the government for demanding and collecting taxes. This truculent individual, in exchange for two gold-pieces issued by the late czar, disclosed a shortcut across the Lettish border. In his gratitude Sergei sang the peasant a questionable song, and the peasant was so exhilarated for the next half-hour that he did not beat his wife as he had intended.

It was dark when Sergei reached the dividing line. Here hundreds of Red soldiers were stationed to prevent Sergei's leaving Russia, and hundreds of Lettish soldiers to prevent his entering Latvia. All soldiers were told that honest men cross by train with legal passports. Only conspirators, smugglers, bandits and bad men make their way by foot. Therefore the soldiers learned to shoot first and relax afterward.

With only instinct as his compass, Sergei plunged forward. As he walked, he sang softly:

"One more drink for the stomach's sake,
One more, once again, and again and again."

His voice rose:

"Once more, once again and again and again,
One more drink for the stomach's sake."



When he had told his story, his hosts decided he was a far better liar than any of them.

"Halt!" The bark riveted him to the ground. The flash of a bayonet was visible through the trees.

Sergei ceased breathing for a moment. Then the white of the bayonet advanced. Suddenly he found himself running. Bullets! Thousands of roaring bullets, a veritable hailstorm, he thought.

From the right and left, overhead, underfoot, whizzing, spitting bullets. Still he ran. Branches tripped him. His hands were bleeding. His eyes danced dizzily. Young trees poked him maliciously in the ribs. Still the bullets poured. And still he ran.

Apparently the Red guard had called for aid. Now bullets sped at him with the consummate fury of a tornado. When he opened his eyes, he saw he was out of the forest. Before him was a gray, muddy rivulet—that thin line of water that marked the dividing line between two worlds. He stumbled into it and splashed out of it.

The shots continued, this time from the Lettish, but just as wild. And panting for breath, his heart pounding, Sergei ran.

Wet, chilled, hunted! He circled about in the open, and then

sped toward the ugly strip of woods, the first of Lettish forests. He ran on and on, the song of the bullets speeding him unmercifully. Then the song died away. He fell, exhausted but exultant.

An hour later he was on his way chanting light-heartedly:

"For he was born to be hanged,
And all night long they beat him,
For he was born to be hanged,
And who were they to cheat him?
For he was born to be hanged."

Nothing of moment happened that night save that a lone wolf came upon him, smelled him, and then unaccountably left. So Sergei knew his protector was with him. He found shelter in a peasant cottage, slept near the stove, and the next morning entertained his host and the family of eleven with a selection of his best songs.

The host produced a guitar (a poor insipid guitar), but Sergei would not play. He had sworn never to play again until he

had found his own.

Now his task was easy. He must ride on freight trains for five days to Libau, avoiding police, who might ask him for his passport. In Libau he would scour the port for a berth on one of the ships going to America. In New York he would desert the ship and find his guitar.

He had a friend in New York, who, he remembered, lived on East Houston Street and could tell him of Ivan Borosovitch, and also of Douna Palatova. Perhaps he could persuade Douna to come back with him. That would be a noble end to the adventure. One would see, one would see. And then feeling quite gay he burst into: "He was born to be hanged."

When his gold coins were nearly gone, he entered the medieval port. He found himself a comfortable room over a stable, hung his toothbrush on the wall, and felt at ease and at home. All that day he interviewed sailors and third mates, and all the next day. Finally he found an audience with a decadent Baltic baron, possessed of only one eye, who was venturing into the rum running business. He listened, grunting, to Sergei's fiction of being a sailor out of work, and then hired him. Whereupon Sergei bought himself a secondhand smock, a waterproof, and a sailor hat that was too small, and appeared for work the next morning.

They sailed the next morning. The Baltic baron had an eccentric habit of drinking several quarts of vodka after breakfast and then cuffing the nearest living being. The first mate growled his orders so that no one understood him. The second mate was as drunk as the captain, and as playful. One of the able seamen brandished a knife to end a nightly argument. The ship tossed like a reed. It was a four weeks' trip to the twelve-mile limit.

Arriving there, they were hailed by a lightless schooner. The Baltic baron took one look at the rum pirates, the naughty boys of the bootlegging business, and collapsed. A fortune-teller had warned him something would go wrong.

From nowhere at all agile men appeared, armed with revolvers. The officers were bound and thrust into their cabins. The men were crowded into the fore-castle. The leader of the invaders looked the men over carefully and selected, after a good deal of consideration, Sergei, for the task of facilitating the transfer of cargo. Sergei could not understand a word directed at him, but he judged from the explosive gestures he must show the captors where the treasured store of fine Lettish and French liqueurs could be found. Which he cheerfully did, although his mind was in a maze at the proceedings.

Before the last barrel had been removed, Sergei slipped from the motor-launch into the schooner and hid quietly among the cargo of barrels. The invading schooner pushed off. Hours later she stopped. The tramp of feet was heard forward. It was still dark. Barrels were lifted and put into the motor-launch. Sergei waited, and then crept ahead. There was barely enough space between two barrels for him to slide through.



Suddenly a head towered above him, and savage eyes blinked. Quickly Sergei extended his hand, and the intruder tripped. Sergei beat the bandit's head across the barrel, and that thick-skulled individual fell unconscious. Sergei exchanged his smock for the other's marine jacket, and then quietly made his way into the motor-launch, where he nodded his head at various orders which he did not obey, so that the bandit leader cursed him for a drunken fool and vowed he would be rid of him.

And he was. Before the muffled motor had ceased its beat, Sergei had leaped out of the boat and into the sand. He ran. It seemed to him that life had resolved itself into a race with fear. His stout little legs against the world. He ran so swiftly he was well out of sight before the rum pirates had recovered from their daze of astonishment. Then he walked. It seemed to him he



Sergei sat on the door-step and plucked his guitar. Douna looked up at him adoringly.

Some forty minutes later Sergei stepped out of the train into a palace. He whistled. The blue beast had evidently sent him to some wealthy patron, for surely these marble halls were not for railway stations. But what were these harassed people doing here? And baggage? Porters?

Tickets? Then it was a railroad station. He had heard America described as a land of gold. But such wealth! What a wonderful country! What better home could one wish than this palace? If he were to live in America he would live here; one did not even need a bed. Those marble slabs were comfortable enough for a king.

A man with a black face—a savage—dressed like the rest except for a red cap, stumbled against him. The savage looked at Sergei. Sergei displayed the piece of paper given him by the blue beast. The savage took him by the elbow, propelled him through the maze of marble and men, and deposited him upon a strange street reverberating with explosions. Sergei put his fingers to his ears. Then the savage in a red cap shoved him into a splendid yellow automobile—Sergei squirmed, for he detested automobiles—and the savage took one of the dollar bills from him and gave him back three pieces of silver.

For five minutes then Sergei waited for death. The automobile charged into other automobiles, into street cars, into small groups of talking people. Nothing happened. Suddenly the automobile stopped and Sergei saw a Russian sign with a picture of a bear. Gurgling joyfully he gave the taxi driver the green bill and one of the silver pieces. The taxi driver looked at him gloatingly and tied a knot in his handkerchief so that he wouldn't forget to tell the wife.

Up the brown steps and into a Russian. Many Russians. They knew him. He knew them. Loud smacking of cheeks. He was thrust into a corner and tea was served, and chunks of black bread. Some one produced a flask of vodka. When he had told his story the vodka flask was empty, the samovar was being refilled, and his hosts decided he was a far better liar than any of them. Strange he had not shown this talent when they had known him in Russia. But one never knows. How often had they seen genius buried for decades, to blossom forth gorgeously without warning!

"Where," asked Sergei, after the vodka flask was shaken meaninglessly, "is Ivan Borosovitch?"

"Ivan Borosovitch," said a mutual acquaintance, "is in Chicago."

(Continued on page 157)

was entering a city, for houses were everywhere about him, magnificent houses of wood, with gardens. Only the nobility, he judged, could live in these houses. Then he saw a man in a blue uniform—a policeman, he judged—and walked boldly up to him.

"Nevva York," said Sergei.

"Ugh?" said the man in blue.

"Da, da," said Sergei.

The policeman frowned.

"What you doin' around here?" asked the policeman.

Sergei cursed his ill-fortune. If only the guitar were with him! But never mind. His voice alone would charm this blue beast.

"He was born to be hanged," he sang.

"Russian," exclaimed the policeman, who was of the new generation and an artist in his way as profound as Morris Gest. "Russki?"

"Da, da, Russki," bellowed Sergei in relief.

"Sure," said the policeman. "My sister's a hat-check girl in one of them joints. Come along."

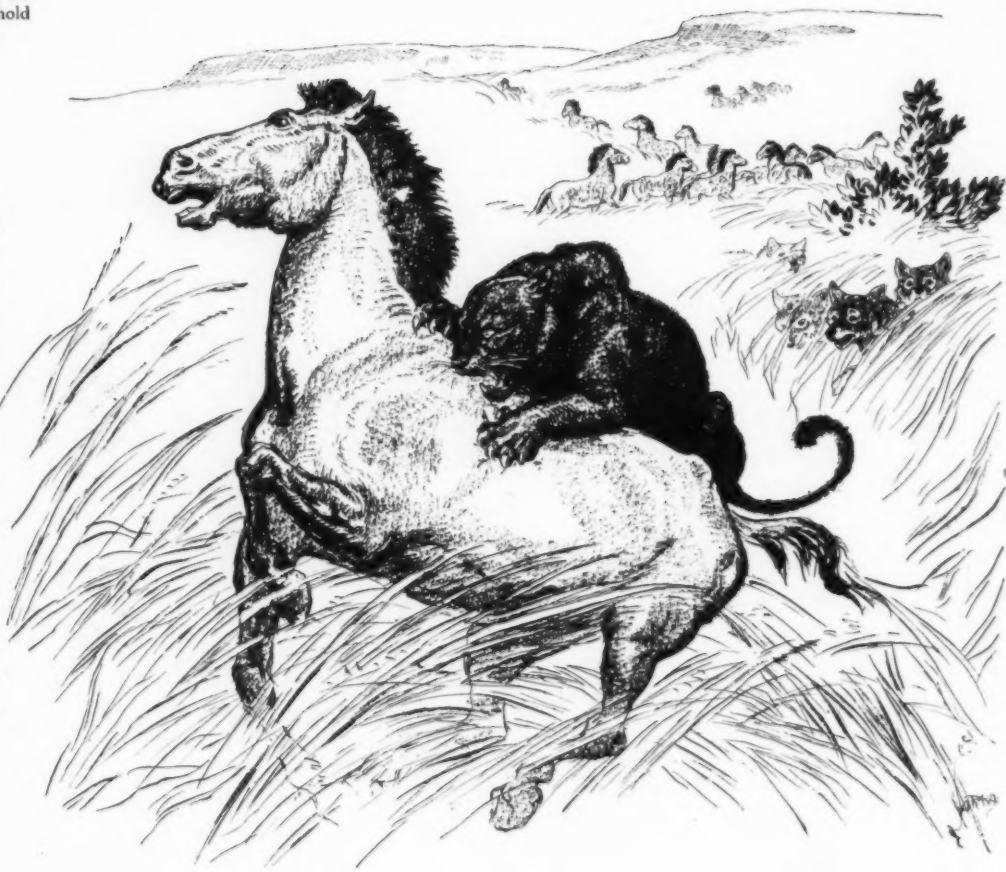
The blue beast led him to a railroad station.

"You got mazumeh?" he asked, rubbing his thumb against the index finger suggestively.

"Ah," said Sergei and produced a gold coin. The policeman looked at it, took it, and gave him two dollar bills in exchange. Then he wrote something on a piece of paper, lifted Sergei by the coat sleeve, and deposited him in the smoker of the nine-ten that had just rattled in.

The maddened stallion bucked, but the black leopard's hold was secure.

SOME little time ago there appeared in this magazine Professor Roberts' really thrilling and, so to speak, scientific story of the first dog. Here, following, is his story of the first horses to be domesticated by our remote cave ancestors, an event the results of which have influenced men's lives down the ages—though in a few years, perhaps, the only horses to be seen may be in museum cases.



Children of the Wind

By

Charles G. D. Roberts

Illustrated by Charles Sarka

A CONFUSING dapple of white sunlight and greenish purple leaf-shadows filled the little wooded knoll, and rendered quite invisible the forms of the two motionless watchers who were peering so intently through the branches. Gort, as was his custom, stood erect, leaning on his spear-shaft, his deep eyes brooding and expectant, as if he would drag some new thought, some new knowledge, from the familiar sight of a herd of wild horses pasturing on the grassy plain which lay outspread before him. Close beside him crouched young Borg, immobile as his leader, but strung taut, as if ready to spring, and in his hot blue eyes only the fierce eagerness of the hunter anticipating the joy of the kill. In his left hand he gripped his short, sturdy bow, while his right held a flint-tipped arrow, ready to be fitted to the string when the herd should move within bowshot. Between his

feet lay his short, heavy spear, which he was accustomed to use at close quarters, depending upon his bow for killing at long range. Gort, on the other hand, who had no equal in all the tribe at spear-casting, used a long, light weapon, which he could hurl with deadly accuracy to almost the distance of an effective arrow-flight.

The horses upon which the eyes of the two watchers in the thicket were so intently fixed were of a type not unlike the wild herds which, to this day, roam the remoter plains of eastern Tartary and Mongolia. Small in stature,—the tallest stallions standing under fourteen hands high,—with slender legs, fine hoofs and powerful quarters, they were built for both strength and speed. Savage of temper and ever ready to fight with hoof and tooth, when flight was necessary they were capable of a hurricane speed which the swiftest of their foes could not hope to match. Their heads were large, broad at the eyes, with longish, mule-like ears, their muzzles thick and clumsy. In color they were all of a faded dun, between mouse-color and the tint of withered grasses, with a dark stripe down their spines, and occasional fainter stripings on their legs. Their stiff, upstanding manes,

their rather scanty tails and the long hairs of their fetlocks, were of a rusty black.

The herd was unevenly divided into three troops which kept near but clearly distinct from each other. The two larger troops, each consisting of twelve to fifteen mares led by a watchful and vicious-looking stallion, were accompanied by a few half-grown foals. The third troop, of six mares and a smallish but very alert and suspicious stallion, kept farther aloof. All were strung out in three more or less ordered lines, the stallions leading, instead of being scattered at random over the plain, as domesticated horses with no foes to fear would be. From time to time, when a mare would stray aside after some attractive patch of herbage, the stallion at the head of the line would race around angrily and drive her back into the ranks again with a squeal and a nip. He was taking no chances, either of danger or defection.

Some distance off to either side of the herd, but not in it, lonely and wistful, pastured three or four young stallions. Driven forth by their tyrannical and jealous elders, and not yet strong enough to do battle for and win a troop of their own, they fed solitary and lived precariously, in constant peril from marauders who would never dare approach the redoubtable herd. They were serving a bitter apprenticeship in vigilance and self-reliance. In their sleepless alertness they constituted unwilling but invaluable outposts to the herd.

Pasturing as they came, the three lines were slowly moving toward the knoll where Gort and Borg lay in ambush for them. They were plainly working their way toward a chain of water-holes three or four hundred yards behind the knoll, and it was evident that they would pass within easy range. Gort had brought with him on this expedition his favorite and most skillful hunting-dog—Fanna, daughter of that Fang who, a couple of years before, had given her life for his. Immediately on taking covert, at first sight of the quarry, Gort had sent Fanna off to circle around the herd and drive it toward the ambush. Now he regretted having done so, for he feared that the herd, encumbered as it was with foals, would refuse to be driven.

On this score, however, he need not have been troubled. For suddenly Fanna reappeared, running desperately, but keeping low in the grass for concealment. She slipped in among the bushes and crouched trembling at Gort's feet.

Borg eyed her angrily.

"What's the matter with her?" he demanded in a hissing undertone.

Gort stooped and stroked the panting animal's head. She

looked up at him anxiously, and thrust at his leg with her muzzle as if imploring him to flee from some grave peril.

"It takes a lot to frighten Fanna and turn her from her job," said Gort musingly. "I think it could only be a pack of the red wolves. That would do it. She knows what they are."

Borg sprang to his feet.

"Then we'd better get away quick," he muttered.

"No," said Gort quietly. "It won't be Fanna they're trailing. They're after the horses."

He turned and pointed to a couple of low trees, thick-branched and spreading, which occupied the center of the knoll. "If they should come this way, and smell us out," he continued, "we'll climb into one of those trees, and hoist Fanna up with us among the branches, and stab down with our spears. But they won't trouble about us, I think."

The words were hardly out of his lips when there was a sudden tremendous commotion in the herd. With magical swiftness the two larger troops coalesced, forming themselves into a compact ring with the foals in the center. The third troop bunched together, with some hesitation; but there was no hesitation on the part of the young stallion who led it. With a gallant snort and a squeal of defiance, he raced from front to rear, and with ears laid back and huge teeth bared, faced the approaching enemy.

A panther pounced upon a hunter's back—only to die by a spearthrust from the victim's neighbor.



At this moment, through the rocking grasses, a great pack of the terrible red dogs burst into view, gave tongue ominously for a moment, and then in grim silence swept down upon the herd.

The young mares of the third troop, having no foals to fight for, at once broke and fled away, their dark tails streaming behind them in the wind of their wild flight; and their doughty lord galloped after them, though reluctantly. There was no reason why he should stay and fight, when the unapproachable and tireless speed of his charges secured them against all pursuit. And the dreadful red pack was wasting no attention upon them.

As to the solitary young stallions scattered wide apart over the plain, the case was different. At the first alarm the two nearest had raced in and joined the main body of the herd, where their presence was very welcome in such an emergency. Another succeeded in gaining the third troop, and fled away with it gayly—only, of course, to be hoofed out ignominiously a little later, when the fugitives should have put sufficient distance between themselves and danger. A fourth, however, was less fortunate. Pasturing morosely far away to the right, he saw himself cut off from both sections of the herd. Terrified, but confident in his speed, he came galloping down directly toward the knoll. And four great dogs, detaching themselves from the pack, came racing after him.

"We'll get them all," grunted Borg, his eyes blazing, as he fitted an arrow to his bowstring. Gort raised and poised his long spear. The dog Fanna sprang up and stood stiff-legged and quivering, the hair lifting savagely along her neck. She began to whimper eagerly, but Gort quieted her with a touch.

When the fleeing stallion was about a hundred and fifty paces from the knoll, his pursuers perhaps twice the distance behind him, his course led him close past a clump of tall bamboo-grass. As he brushed the slender stems, they parted. A lithe, dark shape launched itself forth and alighted fairly upon his withers, where it clutched and clung with deep-sunken claws, and strove to reach forward to his throat. The maddened stallion bucked into the air, striving to shake his dreadful rider off. But the black leopard's hold was secure, and she clung to him, snarling harshly. He reached around and tried to seize her with his teeth; but as he did so, he caught sight of the four great dogs sweeping up; and in mad panic he dashed on again toward the knoll, his wild speed, for the moment, hardly checked by the monstrous burden.

Gort's eager eyes grew thoughtful. If one of these horses, children of the wind, could carry a beast like that leopard, why not a man? And why not under control and guidance? Tremendous possibilities flashed through his mind, in that instant. Then they were blotted out in the imminence of the crisis, and he was the hunter again, every nerve strung to the pitch of decisive action.

By the time the frantic young stallion, with his burden of doom, had arrived within forty or fifty paces of the knoll, the leopard succeeded in writhing forward upon his back and reaching his throat with a rending slash of her claws. With a choking scream he plunged forward on his knees, and rolled over on his side; and instantly the leopard was upon his neck and head, pinning him down, and holding herself well out of reach of his blindly thrashing hoofs. The struggle lasted but a second or two, and then the victim lay still.

A moment more, and the four red dogs arrived.

Infuriated past all caution by the leopard's interference with their chase,—to all the hunting beasts an intolerable affront,—they hurled themselves upon her in deadly silence. But she seemed to have eyes in the back of her head, and she was ready for them. To her it appeared that it was they who were trying to rob her of her prey. But for her rage she would have hesitated to face four such dangerous opponents, but whipping about like a snake, upon the body of her victim, she caught the foremost of her assailants a lightning blow which laid open one side of his face, blinding one eye, and hurled him aside yelping. But at the same moment the next dog sank his fangs deep into her foreleg, paralyzing that weapon; another fastened upon her throat, and the last, darting forward, seized her by one hindleg. Spitting and screeching, she rolled off the body of the horse, and doubled herself up so as to rake the bellies of her adversaries with the hind claws still left free.

"Now!" snapped Gort. "I'll take the devil-cat."

His spear hurtled forth, unerring, and transfixing the leopard clear through the loins. Simultaneously sped Borg's arrow, and pierced one of the dogs through the neck. Then, hot with excitement and the lust of battle, he was about to dart forward and finish the affair with spear and club. But Gort checked him firmly.

"No," said he, drawing his bow. "We must not show ourselves. We must end these off with arrows. We must kill them all, and then run for it, keeping the knoll between us and the pack yonder till we gain the shelter of the woods over there. We don't want those red devils on our trail. Look! They are being beaten off by the herd. They are getting wary, and circling around it. Soon they'll come this way, on the track of these four. We must clear out. But we'll leave them plenty to eat and keep them busy."

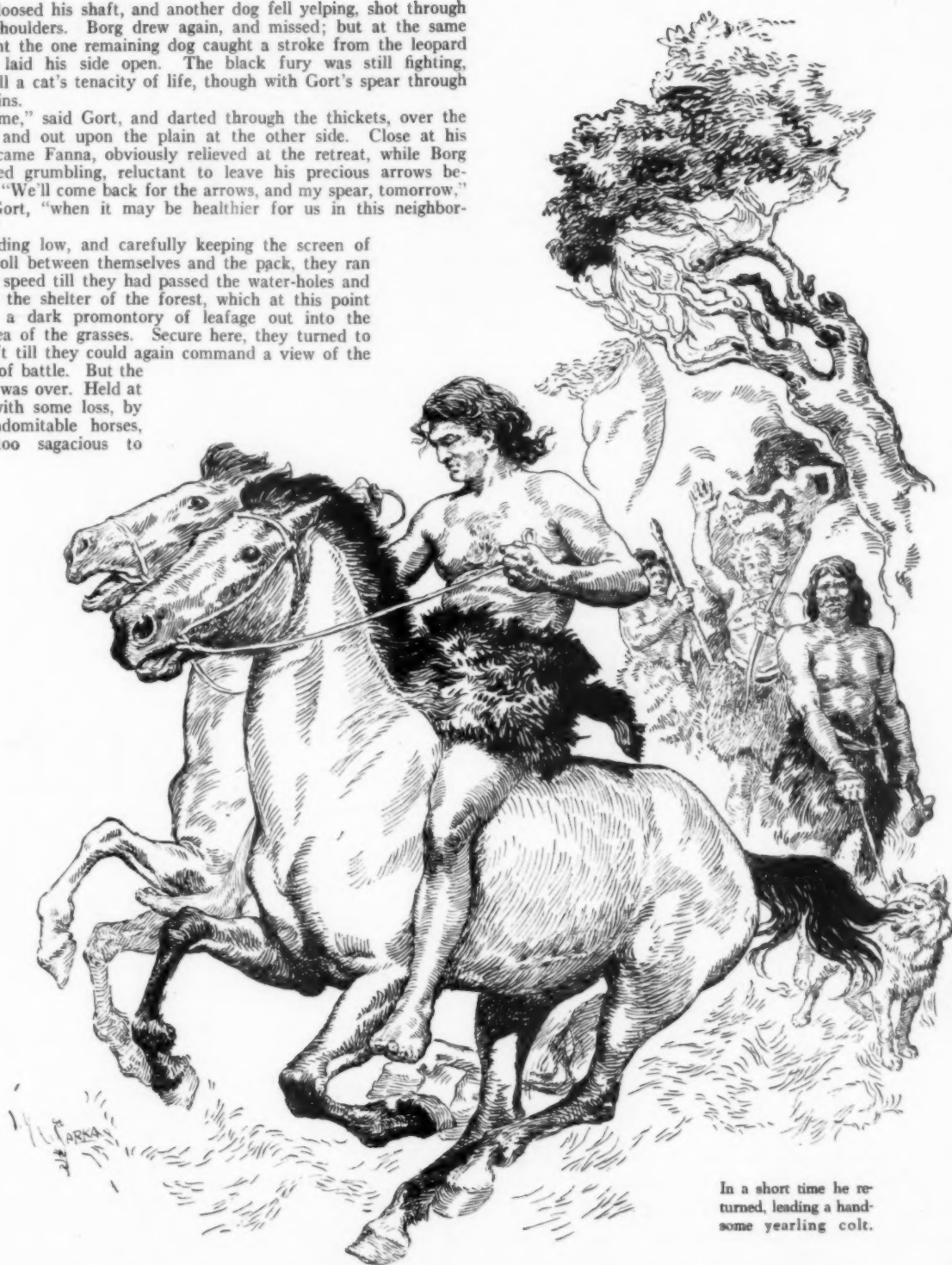


He sprang into the air, shaking himself to get rid of the strange burden.

He loosed his shaft, and another dog fell yelping, shot through both shoulders. Borg drew again, and missed; but at the same moment the one remaining dog caught a stroke from the leopard which laid his side open. The black fury was still fighting, with all a cat's tenacity of life, though with Gort's spear through her loins.

"Come," said Gort, and darted through the thickets, over the knoll, and out upon the plain at the other side. Close at his heels came Fanna, obviously relieved at the retreat, while Borg followed grumbling, reluctant to leave his precious arrows behind. "We'll come back for the arrows, and my spear, tomorrow," said Gort, "when it may be healthier for us in this neighborhood."

Bending low, and carefully keeping the screen of the knoll between themselves and the pack, they ran at top speed till they had passed the water-holes and gained the shelter of the forest, which at this point thrust a dark promontory of leafage out into the pale sea of the grasses. Secure here, they turned to the left till they could again command a view of the scene of battle. But the battle was over. Held at bay, with some loss, by the indomitable horses, and too sagacious to



In a short time he returned, leading a handsome yearling colt.

wage a difficult war for food when they saw an abundant feast awaiting them elsewhere, the red pack had fallen joyously upon the slain stallion and quickly dispatched their wounded kin. The leopard, still alive, but hopelessly encumbered by the spear through her body, had managed to crawl away and crouch behind the thicket of bamboo-grass. But she had been followed, and overwhelmed, and swiftly put out of her misery. The terrible pack was holding carnival over the banquet, while the herd of horses, still in formation of defense, was moving off rapidly in the opposite direction.

"We're well out of that," remarked Gort cheerfully, leading the way toward the far-off river and the caves of the tribe. Young Borg was not so cheerful, for the hunt had failed, and he hated returning home to Ee-la empty-handed. Gort, however, was full of quiet elation, as he threaded his way, noiseless and wary-eyed, through the tangle of giant trunks and festooning vines, with Fanna scouting ahead. To him the hunt had not been a failure, for it had given him a new and thrilling idea. Moreover, the day was still young; they had plenty of arrows left; there was game in the forest; (Continued on page 147)

She lifted startled eyes. "This is good of you," he said.



The Lost Chord

By

William Dudley
Pelley

Illustrated by Forrest C. Crooks

How is a man, who lives in New York as William Pelley does, able so faithfully to reflect the details of contemporary life in a remote Vermont small town? That is the question the editors are asked again and again. The answer is simple. Mr. Pelley, up to a very few years ago, ran a newspaper of just the sort he writes about in just such a Vermont town as he employs for background to his tales. And no one has a better opportunity to know people inside and out than the editor of a small-town newspaper.

I REMEMBER vividly the afternoon of Mary Bowen's first appearance in the office of our Vermont daily newspaper. A cold, raw February day, it was, back in 1921. Melancholy twilight had smothered down outside. The press was still, and the carrier boys had gone with their papers. As the day's labors drew to a close, we heard the street door open and shut, and a woman's voice ask for Sam Hod. An instant later she stood, shy and distressed, on the threshold of the inner room which my partner and I reserve for ourselves.

From the moment of her inquiry I had paused in my work. It was her voice. Never till then had I heard one like it—and I have heard few voices like it since. It held a smoothness, a depth, a quality that even in the most prosaic conversation made people listen. Glancing up as her figure showed in the doorway, I sensed a "story."

A girl in her middle twenties, I took her to be, with nothing especially remarkable about her unless it was the unusual droop to her posture, as though her limbs and feet burned painfully and supported her with difficulty. Her face was plain, and there was the look of a hunted deer in the eyes. But her small round hat crowned her becomingly, and her dark, chinchilla-cloth coat fitted her, though its cheap fur collar looked moth-eaten,

and its seams were white and threadbare. Just an ordinary Vermont country-town young woman she appeared to be, with hands that showed harsh manual labor—hands now ungloved and red with cold.

"Lawyer Brickhart told me to come and see you," she explained to Sam. "I've just got to find work!" And from her manner of accepting a chair and biting down on her colorless lower lip, both Sam and I knew her situation was desperate. She came from North Foxboro, it developed, where she had been graduated from a one-horse business college, and now she'd come down to Paris, Vermont, to get a job as stenographer. But there was no job.

I felt a little heart-pinch of compassion as I continued my labors and yet watched her from the corner of my eye. Small wonder she had not impressed any masculine employer sufficiently to secure a position. She was one of those women whom men take for granted—one of those patient, wistful-faced girls whom life has battered needlessly hard. "Just one of earth's females," as Uncle Joe Fodder had once designated a similar woman—the type of plodding, self-effacing, willing-hearted person who gets the short end in most everything, and who is always left to do the unpleasant chores of society—the sort of people who know little love because it doesn't occur to others they may be hungry for it, who mind babies, sit up with the sick—all without recompense—and after church suppers may always be found out in the kitchen washing the dishes.

"Why don't you set up a little place of your own?" my grizzled partner suggested. "Why not cater to lawyers and firms who want typewritin' done but can't quite afford to pay weekly wages for a regular stenographer all the time?"

"But I haven't the money to pay any rent. And furniture and a machine—"

"If you really mean business, I'd just as soon help you out," Sam told her, touched by the elusive pathos about her. "And we have quite a lot of work here on the *Telegraph* we gave to

Sophie Sparrow before she closed her office to get married. We'd be glad to contribute that."

I thought the girl was going to break down and cry at Sam's kindness. The tears did well up in her big dumb eyes, and once they brimmed over. Yet she kept her sweet smile.

"You see, I borrowed the money to go through business school after the influenza took both Father and Mother. I still owe it and must pay it back. I didn't really want to be a stenographer, and I'm afraid I'm not a terribly good one, even now. I wanted to be—"

She halted as though about to confess a weakness. Her bare, reddened hands toyed with the frayed bag she had dropped in her lap, and her color was not altogether caused by winter cold.

"Yes, what was it you wanted to be?" asked Sam paternally.

"I wanted to be a singer. You know—cultivate my voice, make a name for myself. Mr. Abbott, the 'cello teacher, always said I had a voice worth cultivating. But to do it costs money."

"Well, pshaw, now don't let yourself get sidetracked," Sam said. "Go right ahead and do it. Only instead o' workin' for somebody else and runnin' the risk o' bein' fired every slack season, strike out on your own. I'll speak to some of my friends about you. Trouble with most girls is, they don't give a hoot what they do, so long's they bag a man in the end. I like to see girls get ahead on their own. Good business women always make good wives."

She colored deeper at that, and made some reply about it being a mighty long time before any man would want her. And the poignant part of it was, both Sam and I knew how truthfully she spoke—that is, unless she threw herself away on some big-wristed, thick-ankled, thicker-headed young clodhopper who



"He hasn't skipped!" defended Mary. "He's coming back on the eight o'clock train."

might consider her as just so much desirable stock for his farm.

"Poor girl!" mused Sam when Mary Bowen had departed at last—tearful in earnest to have found such a friend. "She's the salt of the earth, her kind, but the man who might marry her and find blessed happiness in her faithfulness and affection wont recognize it till he's old as me. Then it'll be too late."

"Well, she's certainly got a voice she ought to train for music. I noticed it the moment she spoke," I put in.

"Only she lacks the personality to put herself across. That kind always does. Ambition enough, but the pep to hoist herself into recognition is quite another matter. Hope the young folks here will be kind to her, but you know how young folks are. They take each other at their estimate of themselves. And this Bowen girl wasn't exactly born a self-booster."

"All the same, Sam, it's the unexpected always happens. She may make a match that'll surprise all of us."

"Possible but not likely," Sam said.

"Go over and see Jim Hawkes in the mornin', Bill. Tell him we'll stand good for a couple o' months on her rent, to see how she prospers."

So Mary Bowen became a sort of outside protégée of the *Telegraph*. She opened a bare little room over the five-and-ten-cent store, rented a desk, a chair and a secondhand typewriter, paid two of her last ten dollars for a sign and two more for some cards, found a boarding place with the Widow Mathers in School Street—then sat down and waited for business.

It was a precarious way to earn a livelihood at best. She barely met her board the first month, and the second fell behind on her rent. She was so anxious to please, so fearful of not giving satisfaction, that her pothooks suffered grievously. After a time local business men quit giving her dictation, and her work was confined mostly to copying transcripts or addressing envelopes. Meanwhile she was trying wistfully to get into the social life of the town. And making no better showing at that.

The young bucks of Paris confessed there was little "kick" in taking her around; and the girls decided that she was "slow" or "a poor stick," and either made open sport of her—which was Chinese cruelty to a girl of her sensitive spirit—or permitted her to retain their favor by following them around in their social activities and doing the heavy work. Somehow she just didn't fit in. The poor soul didn't possess the wherewithal for clothes like those provided by indulgent parents for her contemporaries, and she spoiled the picture at any social galaxy in consequence. Eventually they began ignoring her altogether.

No one knew of the long afternoons that she spent in her bare little office when there was no work to do and she lacked the courage to go out and solicit it. No one knew of the nights at the boarding-house when she climbed to her room, locked the door, threw herself face downward on her bed and wept bitterly. A score of times in the following spring I met her walking by herself on unfrequented streets or along the roads under the stars. Several times I had her up to my house; on such occasions she sat herself at the piano and sang tender, beautiful, old-fashioned songs that left a sort of mellowness in the hearts of those who heard her.

What the girl really wanted was some one of her own age to chum with her and understand her—or better still, some fellow to love her, help her to grow and flower out into the woman and wife that God had meant her to become. But there was no one—at least, not then.

"Hang it all!" stormed Sam Hod. "Why don't some male goop in this town get wise to himself and marry that girl?"



Talented voice or not, she's domestic—not commercial. She's the marryin' kind, that ought to have a home and a man to love, and a couple of babies to coo over. Instead of which, they run wild over flappers like that shallow Williams

girl—or that snippy Grace Rawlins. I wish I could write an editorial about her. Mebbe I will!"

But of course he didn't. We had to sit on the side-lines and watch life maltreat the girl and knock her from pillar to post. And the look of the hunted deer increased to the point of terror in her eyes, and one night when Will Seaver asked her to come to his store and take dictation, she turned and fled down the street. That sort of thing couldn't go on, of course; and it didn't.

Old Micah Preston was stricken with his first apoplectic stroke that October, and Fate took kindly note of lonely Mary Bowen and altered the course of her days. . . .

About eleven o'clock at night it was, that the phone bell rang in the Mathers boarding-house. All the lodgers, including Mary, had gone to bed. The Widow responded sleepily, only to come to the foot of the stairs a minute later and call excitedly: "It's Lawyer Brickhart, Mary. He's gotta talk with you right off—on somethin' important."

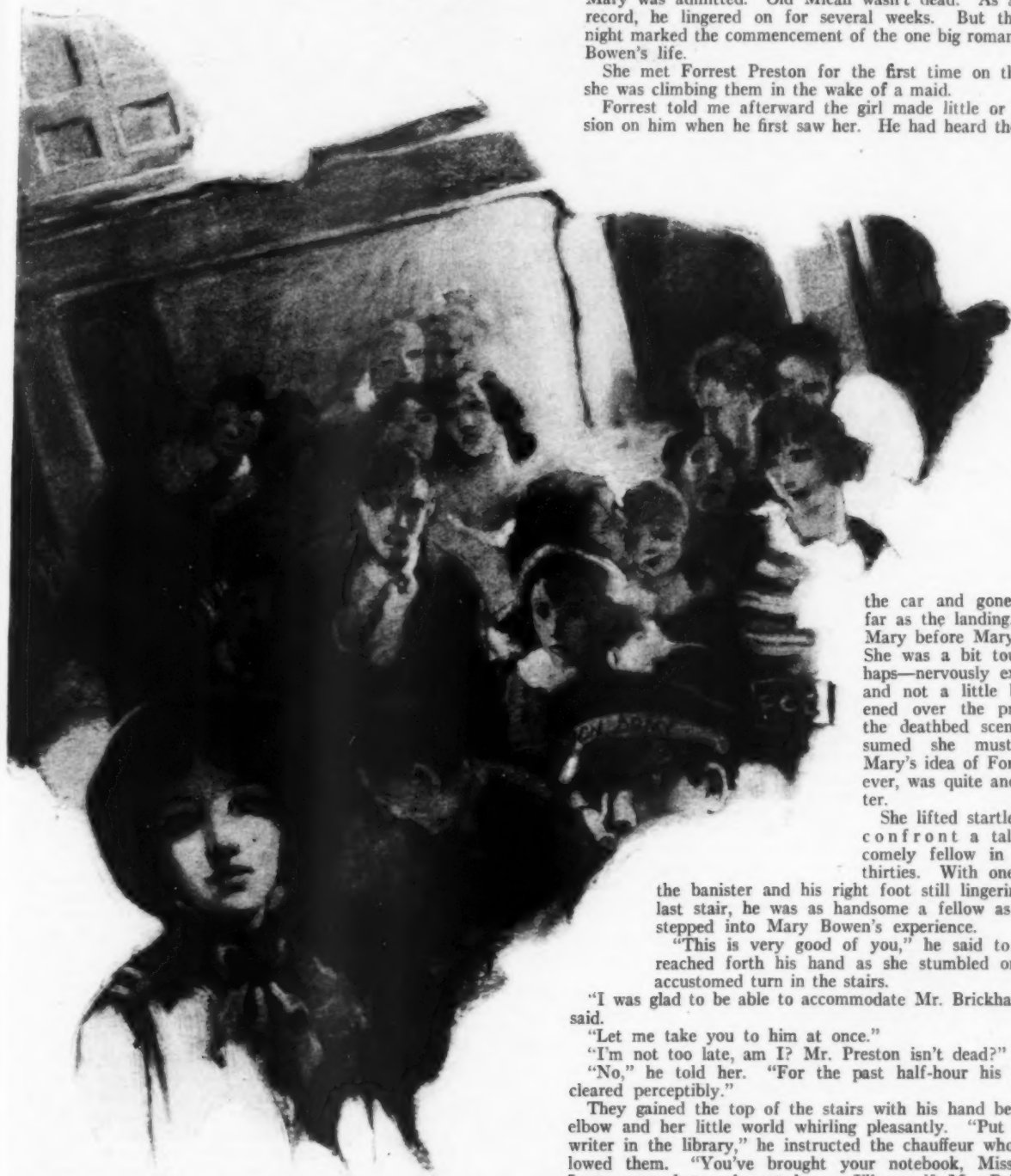
The girl wrapped a blanket over her nightdress and padded down the front stairs. It was a wild, windy night. The town and boarding-house shivered and creaked in the grip of a rainless gale, colloquially known as a "Shirkshire." She had difficulty hearing the lawyer's voice.

"I'm sorry to disturb you this time of night, Miss Bowen," said he, "—but it's emergency. Do you think you could manage to take a job of dictation from me between now and midnight? No other girl will venture out on account of the storm."

"What's the trouble?" asked Mary weakly.

"Old Mr. Preston has had a stroke. I'm talking now from

Mary Bowen, in that great moment of all our lives, was "putting herself across" at last.



his house on the hill. He may die between now and morning, and wants to alter his will. The change is so drastic, I've advised him to draw a new one. Will you come up here and help me out?"

"Of course I will, Mr. Brickhart. Just as soon as I dress."

"I'm sending the Preston car down after you. Call at your office and bring your typewriter, as you'll have to do the work up here. I'll pay you anything."

But as Mary rang off, she wasn't thinking of the pay. Somebody needed her; that was sufficient. So she twisted up her hair, dressed so quickly she fumbled everything, but was ready when the Preston chauffeur sounded his horn at the gate above the whine of the storm.

It was twenty-five minutes to midnight when the car drew under the *porte cochère* of the upper Vermont Avenue mansion. Mary was admitted. Old Micah wasn't dead. As a matter of record, he lingered on for several weeks. But that eventful night marked the commencement of the one big romance in Mary Bowen's life.

She met Forrest Preston for the first time on the stairs as she was climbing them in the wake of a maid.

Forrest told me afterward the girl made little or no impression on him when he first saw her. He had heard the arrival of

the car and gone down as far as the landing. He saw Mary before Mary saw him. She was a bit tousled, perhaps—nervously excited too, and not a little bit frightened over the prospect of the deathbed scene she assumed she must witness. Mary's idea of Forrest, however, was quite another matter.

She lifted startled eyes to confront a tall, slender, comely fellow in his early thirties. With one hand on

the banister and his right foot still lingering on the last stair, he was as handsome a fellow as had ever stepped into Mary Bowen's experience.

"This is very good of you," he said to her, and reached forth his hand as she stumbled on the unaccustomed turn in the stairs.

"I was glad to be able to accommodate Mr. Brickhart," Mary said.

"Let me take you to him at once."

"I'm not too late, am I? Mr. Preston isn't dead?"

"No," he told her. "For the past half-hour his mind has cleared perceptibly."

They gained the top of the stairs with his hand beneath her elbow and her little world whirling pleasantly. "Put the typewriter in the library," he instructed the chauffeur who had followed them. "You've brought your notebook, Miss Bowen? Leave your hat and coat here. I'll see if Mr. Brickhart is ready."

Mary looked about her when he disappeared into the sick-room. Never had she believed such elegance. It overwhelmed her. The propinquity of Forrest Preston, too, may have had its effect. The library, where the servants were arranging her temporary work-table, was lighted by shaded amber lamps and an open fire. Across from the library was a music-room; dimly Mary could discern the gilded pipes of a high wall-organ. But

Preston the younger was the *pièce de résistance* of that whole experience.

She had read his name often in the *Telegraph*, when he came from New York to visit his uncle. He had likewise been mentioned by local girls in Mary's hearing—by his first name intimately, as though they knew him. Which they didn't. Hardly a girl in Paris knew him. He had been born on Preston Hill, but educated abroad. Rumor had it that a brilliant career in international law and diplomacy opened before him, yet it was whispered that the relations between uncle and nephew were not as cordial as they might have been. Even as Mary waited, agreeably dizzy, she wondered if the forthcoming change in Micah's will in any way concerned his nephew.

"All ready," came the latter's voice a moment later, however. And she arose and passed into the sick-room.

AT once, electrically, she forgot her self-consciousness at sight of that wasted figure among the pillows. Every maternal, ministering instinct was aroused in the ensuing hour. And because she did not think of her work,—only of the service,—she took down Len's dictation without flaw or falter. And yet with dismay she did not miss the significance of the lawyer's gesture when, arising to depart, he caught her elbow. They stood alone in the chamber—the doors had been carefully locked. Forrest had been excused at the time of her entrance.

"Miss Bowen, it is Mr. Preston's emphatic wish—in fact, it is his specific order—that not a person be informed of the altered terms of this will until he is dead and it comes up for probate. Is that quite clear, Miss Bowen?"

"You mean—not even Mr. Forrest?"

"Mr. Forrest most of all. No one, understand?"

"Yes, Mr. Brickhart."

"You must give me *your word of honor* you'll keep it secret."

"You've got it, Mr. Brickhart."

"Then go into the library and transcribe those notes. I'll see that Forrest doesn't intrude."

She did hurry. She clicked off the will, and along toward morning, she was one of its witnesses. She was fifty dollars richer when she finally left for the boarding-house and breakfast. But by noon of the second day thereafter, a wild rumor started through a town that till then had always looked upon Mary with indifference. I was told of it by my partner. Into the office he came after lunch, chuckling delightedly to himself. "Maybe you win, Bill," said he. "I think you said something once about Mary Bowen makin' a match that'd dumfounded all of us."

"Has she?" I asked in amazement.

"She hasn't yet; but it looks like she stands a show. You've heard how she responded to Brickhart's summons in the Preston will business, haven't you? Well, Uncle Joe Fodder just told me he met Forrest Preston over on the East Road an hour ago—with Mary beside him in that big green roadster. What's more, he wasn't actin' as though he exactly hated her."

"But Lord! That chap could have his pick of the best in New York, Newport or Paris—Paris, *France!*"

"What if he could? Nothin' the matter with Mary, is there? And stranger things have happened. I'm not yet ready to admit the Age of Miracles ended in A. D. 33. I've been a country newspaper man too long."

PARIS, VERMONT, as a town—at least the younger feminine portion of it—was not only dumfounded when it got the news; it was stunned.

"To think," snapped Grace Rawlins, hands upside down on her hips, and elbows out combatively, as she met three girls in my hearing in front of the post office, "that so swell a chap as that rich guy, Europe-raised and everything, should mix it with such a blaa-eyed dumb-bell as Mary Bowen! What's happening to the world these days when such as her can walk off with a catch like that? It must be the war!"

Apparently, as the days went by, the rest of them didn't come in anywhere. The motor rides continued, and all the valley witnessed. When old Micah Preston appeared to improve for a time, and Mrs. John Stevens gave a dinner to her niece from Boston, our local princesses gnashed their teeth to read the name of Mary Bowen among the old social Gorgon's guests. "Miss Mary Bowen pleased with several vocal selections," was the way our paper reported the stenographer's participation in the affair.

"The gall of her!" sputtered Julia Thompson, almost inarticulate for a time in her rage. "To flaunt her machinations right here before our eyes, where she's always been a nobody. You'd think she'd show better taste. Yes, it must be the war!"

And yet, while there were "machinations," for a time at least, they were not of Mary's making. Instead of Aladdin's Lamp, she had rubbed her typewriter and it had produced a genie who had reached down, caught her up, lifted her into Seventh Heaven.

I met her on West Main Street one sunset with Forrest walking beside her—and if ever a girl's Prince Charming looked the rôle, Forrest measured up. Mary's color was high and her eyes were starry. With hair blown prettily about her plain face, she was looking far away toward the distant haze over autumn mountains where the foliage was splashed with vermilion and gold. She did not recognize me, but I forgave her. The girl in her delirium of having such a fellow take her up, favor her with his attentions, tell her of his love for her—as we knew afterward he did—was beyond recognizing anyone or anything earthly.

What did the prince see in the little goose-girl? Against hope Sam and I prayed that he had sense enough to see what we had believed we beheld from the first. We were right. And we were wrong!

Though deliberately, even maliciously, he had concentrated his attentions upon her, it had not been until the aftermath of Mrs. Stevens' dinner that he had awakened to the real Mary Bowen behind the facial plainness. Our paper had reported that she had "pleased with vocal selections." But Mary had done more. She had disclosed to the Preston prince her lonely soul and her hungry heart. And he had looked into it and seen. Mrs. Stevens told me about it afterward.

"Her frock of simple white muslin was the most charming costume in the room and made the rest look vulgar," she declared. "She had her dark hair done prettily about her pale forehead, and her self-consciousness only made her more winsome. I remembered her voice in Calvary choir, which was why I asked her to oblige us. I think she did it for the sake of Forrest. Anyhow, she sang 'Annie Laurie,' and 'In the Gloaming.' Finally when we'd encored her again and again, she sang 'Then You'll Remember Me.' I give you my word, William, I turned and looked at my husband, and tears the size of marbles were rolling down his cheeks. But it wasn't until she sang 'The Lost Chord' that I caught the look on Forrest Preston's face. He was staring transfixed—as though the girl were a visiting angel. If he's really in love with her, as all the town is gossiping, it started from that night and that song."

About seven weeks this sort of thing continued; and then, just when the stupendous thing seemed about to flower into the sweetest romance that has ever occurred in our Green Mountain community—two awful events broke.

Micah Preston died, and Grace Rawlins discovered why Forrest Preston had "lowered himself to take up with the Bowen baggage"—at first.

MICAH was hardly under the sod before Grace burst into our office and confronted June Farley, the proofreader.

"I'm wise now!" she shrieked. "I know why Forry Preston got all het up over Mary Bowen. Oh, she's got a fine jolt coming! Wait till I tell her. And I'm going to tell her, you bet your life!"

"What do you know?" June asked.

"He aint in love with her in the slightest. He's been kidding her along just to get something out of her—information! She was the only one besides the lawyer who knew the terms of his uncle's will. Forry was going to need money to go into some big deal this winter and wanted to know where he stood. And he sparked that little Bowen, thinking that if she fell for him hard enough, she'd blab."

"Who told you?"

"Natalie Stevens told me. She claims she made Forry Preston confess. Oh, wait till I find Mary Bowen. Wait till I do!"

Sam and I overheard. It made us slightly bilious. To try to silence Grace Rawlins was useless. We could only pray it was spiteful feminine spleen behind the indictment. The girl had departed the place, anyhow, before we could remonstrate.

Straight to the stenographer's office in the Hawkes Block she smoked—two equally vengeful companions with her. An important telephone-call delayed me getting there to help if I might. I only arrived in time to hear the last of the disclosure. The door was open as I came up the stairs. I saw the tableau they all made.

Mary had arisen, though she was clutching the desk-edge tightly for support. Face and hands had gone white.

"You lie!" I heard her say.

"Lie, do I? I see you've had a telephone put in. Call him up and find out."

(Continued on page 111)



He had the sensation of a man who hears that the daughter of an old flame has married.

The Rich Boy

By

F. Scott Fitzgerald

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD is one of the constantly increasing number of American writers and artists living abroad. But for all that, the author of "The Great Gatsby," "This Side of Paradise," and the present story, writes only of Americans as they appear against their natural background. The so-called European "taint," even in the manner of his writing, has never appeared; nor is it at all likely to.

Illustrated by Frederic R. Gruger

The Story So Far:

THIS is the story of Anson Hunter, a rich boy—one of the very rich who possess and enjoy early, and who are thus made soft where others are hard, cynical where others are trustful—who think, deep in their hearts, that they are better than other men, because other men have to discover for themselves the compensations and refuges of life. . . .

Anson was the eldest of six children who would one day split up fifteen million dollars, children of a New York family socially established for generations. And at preparatory school, at Yale, and in his life as a New York business man, his inherited advantages increased his sense of superiority. He fell in love presently, with Paula Legendre, a dark serious beauty from California; but the idyllic interlude just fell short of a culmination in matrimony when Anson took one drink too many and made a rather shameful exhibition at a family dinner. Somehow Anson could not take the affair as seriously as Paula and her people; and slowly, half heart-broken, they drifted apart.

A lighter affair followed, with a *nouveau riche* named Dolly Karger, who was passionately enamored of Anson; yet when on one hectic occasion he would have taken her for his own, the face of Paula seemed to look down from a dim framed picture above their heads, and Anson turned away. (*The story continues in detail:*)

WHEN Dolly married, the following autumn, Anson was in London on business. Like Paula's marriage, it was sudden, but affected him in a different way. At first he thought it was funny and had a tendency to laugh when he thought of it. Later it depressed him—it made him feel old.

There was something repetitive about it—why, Paula and Dolly had belonged to different generations—he had a foretaste of the sensation of a man of forty who hears that the daughter of an old flame has married. He wired congratulations, and unlike those he had wired Paula, they were sincere—he had never really hoped that Paula would be happy.

When he returned to New York, he was made a partner in the firm, and as his responsibilities increased, he had less time on his hands. The refusal of a life insurance company to issue him a policy, made such an impression on him that he stopped drinking for a year and claimed to feel better physically, though I think he missed the convivial recounting of those Cellinisque adventures which in his early twenties had been such a part of his life. But he never abandoned the Yale Club. He was a figure there, a personality, and the tendency of his class, who were now seven years out of college, to drift away to more sober haunts, was checked by his presence.

His day was never too full, nor his mind too weary, to give

any sort of aid to anyone who asked it. What had been done at first through pride and superiority had become a habit and a passion. And there was always something—a younger brother in trouble at New Haven, a quarrel to be patched up between a friend and his wife, a position to be found for this man, an investment for that. But his specialty was the solving of problems for young married people. Young married people fascinated him, and their apartments were almost sacred to him—he knew the story of their love-affair, advised them where to live and how, and remembered their babies' names. Toward young wives his attitude was circumspect; he never encroached upon the trust which their husbands—strangely enough, in view of his unceasing irregularities—invariably reposed in him.

He came to take a vicarious pleasure in happy marriages and be inspired to an almost equally pleasant melancholy by those that went astray. Not a season passed that he did not witness the collapse of an affair that he himself perhaps had fathered. When Paula was divorced and almost immediately remarried to another Bostonian, he talked about it to me all one afternoon. He would never love anyone as he had loved Paula, but he insisted that he no longer cared.

"I'll never marry," he came to say. "I've seen too much of it, and I know that a happy marriage is a very rare thing. Besides, I'm too old."

BUT he did believe in marriage. Like all men who spring from a happy and successful marriage, he believed in it passionately—nothing he had seen would change his belief, and his cynicism dissolved upon it like air. But he did really consider that he was too old. At twenty-eight he began to accept with equanimity the prospect of marrying without romantic love; he resolutely chose a New York girl of his own class, pretty, intelligent, congenial and above reproach—and set about falling in love with her. But he failed. The things he had said to Paula with sincerity, to other girls with grace, he could no longer say at all without smiling, or with the force necessary to convince.

"When I'm forty," he told his friends, "I'll be ripe. I'll fall for some chorus girl like the rest."

Nevertheless he persisted in his attempt. His mother wanted to see him married, and he could well afford it. He had a seat on the Stock Exchange now, and his earned income came to twenty-five thousand a year. Moreover the idea itself was agreeable,—he spent most of his time with the set he and Dolly had evolved,—and when his friends closed themselves in behind domestic doors at night, he no longer rejoiced in his freedom. He even wondered if he should have married Dolly—not even Paula had loved him more, and he was learning the rarity, in a single life, of true emotion.

Just as this mood began to creep over him, a disquieting story reached his ear. His Aunt Edna, a woman of thirty-eight, was carrying on an open intrigue with a wild, hard-drinking young man named Cary Sloane. Everyone knew of it except his uncle, who for ten years had talked long in clubs and taken his wife for granted.

Anson heard the story again and again with increasing annoyance. Something of his old feeling for his uncle came back to him, a feeling that was more than personal, a reversion toward that family solidarity on which he had based his pride. His intuition singled out the essential point of the affair, which was that his uncle shouldn't be hurt. It was his first experiment in unsolicited meddling, but with his knowledge of Edna's character, he felt that he could handle the matter better than his uncle.

His uncle was in Hot Springs. Anson traced down the sources of the story so that there should be no possibility of mistake, and then he called Edna and asked her to lunch with him at the Plaza next day. Something in his tone frightened her, and she was reluctant; but Anson insisted until she had no excuse for refusing.

She met him at the appointed time in the Plaza lobby, a lovely, faded, gray-eyed blonde in a coat of Russian sable. Five great rings, cold with diamonds and emeralds, sparkled on her slender hands. It occurred to Anson that it was his father's intelligence, and not his uncle's, that had earned that rich brilliance that buoyed up her passing beauty.

Though Edna scented his hostility, she was unprepared for the directness of his approach.

"Edna, I'm astonished at the way you've been acting," he said in a strong, frank voice. "At first I couldn't believe it."

"Believe what?" she demanded sharply.

"You needn't pretend with me, Edna. I'm talking about Cary Sloane. Aside from any other consideration, I didn't think you could treat Uncle Robert—"

"Now, look here, Anson—" she began angrily, but his peremptory voice broke through hers.

"—and your children in such a way. You've been married eighteen years, and you're old enough to know better."

"You can't talk to me like that! You—"

"Yes, I can. Uncle Robert has always been my best friend—" He was tremendously moved. He felt a real distress about his uncle, about his three young cousins.

Edna stood up, leaving her crab-flake cocktail untasted.

"This is the silliest thing—"

"If you won't listen to me, I'll go to Uncle Robert and tell him the whole story—he's bound to hear it sooner or later. And afterward I'll go to old Moses Sloane."

Edna faltered back into her chair.

"Don't talk so loud," she begged him. Her eyes blurred with tears. "You have no idea how your voice carries. You might have chosen a less public place to make all these—all these crazy accusations."

He didn't answer.

"Oh, you never liked me, I know," she went on; "you're just taking advantage of some silly gossip to try and break up the only interesting friendship I've ever had. What have I done to make you hate me so?"

Still Anson waited. There would be the appeal to his chivalry, then to his pity, finally to his superior sophistication; when he had shouldered his way through all these, there would be admissions and he could come to grips with her. By being silent, by being impervious, by returning constantly to his main weapon, which was his own emotion, he bullied her into frantic despair as the luncheon hour slipped away. At two o'clock she took out a mirror and a handkerchief, wiped away the marks of her tears and powdered the slight hollows where they had lain. She had agreed to meet him at her own house at five.

When he arrived, she was stretched on a *chaise-longue* which was covered with cretonne for the summer. The tears he had called up at luncheon seemed to be still standing in her eyes. Then he saw Cary Sloane's dark, anxious presence upon the cold hearth.

"What's this idea of yours?" broke out Sloane immediately.

"I understand you invited Edna to lunch and then threatened her on the basis of some cheap scandal."

Anson sat down.

"I have no reason to think it's only scandal."

"And I hear you're going to take it to Robert Hunter and to my father."

Anson nodded. "Either you break off, or I will," he said.

"What damned business is it of yours, Hunter?"

"Don't lose your temper, Cary," said Edna nervously. "It's only a question of showing him how absurd—"

"For one thing, it's my name that's being handed around," interrupted Anson. "That's all that concerns you."

"Edna isn't a member of your family."

"She most certainly is." His anger mounted. "She owes this house, the very rings on her fingers, to my father's brains. When Uncle Robert married her, she didn't have a penny."

THEY all looked at the rings as if they had a significant bearing on the situation. Edna made a gesture to take them from her hand.

"I guess they're not the only rings in the world," said Sloane.

"Oh, this is absurd," cried Edna. "Anson, will you listen to me? I've found out how the silly story started. It was a maid whom I discharged, and who went right to the Chilicuffs; all these Russians pump things out of their servants, and then put a false meaning on them." She brought down her small fist angrily on the table. "And after we lent them the limousine for a month when we were South last winter—oh, I wish—"

"Do you see?" demanded Sloane eagerly. "This maid got hold of the wrong end of the thing. She knew that Edna and I were friends, and she carried it to the Chilicuffs. In Russia they assume that if a man and a woman—"

He enlarged the theme to a disquisition upon social relations in the Caucasus.

"If that's the case, it had better be explained to Uncle Robert," said Anson dryly, "so that when the rumors do reach him, he'll know they're not true."

Adopting the method he had followed with Edna at luncheon, he let them explain it all away. He knew that they were guilty, and that presently they would cross the thin line from explanation into justification and convict themselves more definitely than he could ever do. By seven they had taken the desperate step



"I understand you invited Edna to lunch," Sloane broke out, "and then threatened her on the basis of some cheap scandal."

of telling him the truth—Robert Hunter's neglect, Edna's empty life, the casual dalliance that had flamed up into a *grande passion*—but like so many true stories, it had the misfortune of being old, and its enfeebled body beat helplessly against the armor of Anson's will. The threat to go to Sloane's father sealed their helplessness; for the latter, a retired cotton-broker out of Alabama, was a notorious fundamentalist who controlled his son by a rigid allowance and the promise that at his next vagary even the allowance would stop forever.

They dined at a small French restaurant, and the discussion continued—at one time Sloane resorted to physical threats; a little later they were both imploring him to give them time. But he was obdurate. He saw that Edna was breaking up, and that her spirit must not be refreshed by any renewal of their passion.

At two o'clock, in a small night-club on Fifty-third Street, Edna's nerves collapsed suddenly, and she cried to go home. Sloane had been drinking hard all evening, and he was faintly maudlin, leaning on the table and weeping a little with his face

in his hands. Quickly Anson gave them his terms. He himself would take Edna back to the country. Sloane was to go away for a month within twenty-four hours. At the end of a year she might, if she wished, tell Robert Hunter that she wanted a divorce and go about it in the usual way.

"Or there's another thing you can do," he said, "if Edna wants to leave her home and her children, there's nothing I can do to prevent your running off together."

"I want to go home," cried Edna again. "Oh, haven't you done enough to us for one day!"

Outside, it was dark, save for a blurred glow from Sixth Avenue down the street. In that light these two who had been lovers looked for the last time into each other's tragic faces, realizing that between them there was not enough youth and strength to avert their eternal parting. Sloane walked suddenly off down the street, and Anson bargained with a taxi-driver for the long ride.

It was almost four: there was a patient flow of cleaning water along the ghostly pavement of Fifth Avenue, and the shadows of two night women flitted over the dark façade of St. Thomas' Church. Then the desolate shrubbery of Central Park, where Anson had often played as a child, and the mounting numbers, significant as names, of the marching streets. This was his city, where his name had flourished through five generations—no change could alter the permanence of its place here, for change itself was the essential substratum by which he and those of his name identified themselves with the spirit of New York. Resourcefulness, will,—for his threats in weaker hands would have been less than nothing,—had washed the dust from his uncle's name, the name of his family, even from this shivering figure that sat beside him in the car.

Cary Sloane's body was found next morning on the lower shelf of Queensborough Bridge. In the darkness and in his excitement he had no doubt thought that it was the water flowing back beneath him, but in less than a second it made no possible difference—unless he had planned to think one last thought of Edna and call her name as he struggled feebly in the water.

ANSON never blamed his own part in this affair—the situation which brought it about had certainly not been of his making. But the just suffer with the unjust, and Anson found that his oldest and most precious friendship was over. He never knew what distorted story Edna told, but he was welcome in his uncle's house no longer.

Just before Christmas, Mrs. Hunter retired to a select Episcopal heaven, and Anson became the responsible head of his family. An unmarried aunt, who had lived with them for years, ran the house and attempted with helpless inefficiency to chaperon the younger girls. All the children were less self-reliant than Anson, more conventional both in their virtues and their shortcomings. Mrs. Hunter's death had postponed the début of one daughter and the wedding of another. Also it had taken something deeply material from all of them, for with her passing, the quiet expensive superiority of the Hunters came to an end.

For one thing, the estate, considerably diminished by two in-



"This is called the family acrobatic stunt."

heritance taxes and soon to be divided among six children, was not a notable fortune any more. Anson saw a tendency in his youngest sisters to speak rather respectfully of families that hadn't "existed" twenty years ago. His own feeling of superiority was not echoed in them—sometimes they were snobbish, that was all. For another thing, this was the last summer they would spend on the Connecticut estate; the clamor against it was too loud: "Who wants to waste the best months of the year shut up in that dead old town?" Reluctantly he yielded—the house would go into the market in the fall, and next summer they would rent a smaller place in Westchester County. It was a step down from the expensive simplicity of his father's idea, and while he sympathized with the revolt, it also annoyed him—during his mother's lifetime he had gone up there at least every other week-end, even in the gayest summers. Yet he himself was part of this change, and his strong instinct for life had turned him in his twenties from the hollow obsequies of that abortive leisure class. He did not see this clearly—he still felt that there was a norm, a standard of society. But there was no norm; it was doubtful if there had ever been a true norm in New York. The few who still paid and fought to enter that "inner" set, succeeded only to find that as a society it scarcely



said Paula. "Every night he carries me upstairs. Isn't that nice of him?"

existed—or, what was more alarming, that the Bohemia from which they fled sat above them at table. •

At thirty, Anson's chief concern was his own growing loneliness. He was sure now that he would never marry. The number of weddings at which he had officiated as best man or usher was past all counting—there was a drawer at home that bulged with the official neckties of this or that wedding party, neckties standing for romances that had not endured a year, for couples who had passed completely from his life. Scarfpins, gold pencils, cuff buttons—presents from a generation of grooms had passed through his jewel-box and been lost; and with every ceremony he was less and less able to imagine himself in the groom's place. Under his hearty good will toward all of them, there was despair about his own future.

As he neared thirty, he grew a little depressed at the inroads that marriage, especially love, had made upon his friendships. Groups of people had a disconcerting tendency to dissolve and disappear. The men from his own college—and it was upon them he had expended the most time and affection—were the most elusive of all. Most of them were drawn deep into marriage; two were dead; one lived abroad; one was in Hollywood writing continuities for pictures that Anson went faithfully to see.

Most of them, however, were permanent commuters with an intricate family life centering around some suburban country club, and it was his estrangement from these that Anson felt most keenly. In the early days of their married life they had all needed him; he gave them advice about their slim finances; he exorcised their doubts about the advisability of bringing a baby into two rooms and a bath—he stood for the great world outside. But now their financial troubles were in the past, and the fearfully expected child had evolved into an absorbing family. They were always glad to see old Anson, but they dressed up for him and tried to impress him with their present importance, and kept their troubles to themselves. They needed him no longer.

A few weeks before his thirtieth birthday, the last of his early and intimate friends was married. Anson acted in his usual rôle of best man, gave his usual silver tea-service and went down to the usual *Homer* to say good-by. It was a hot Friday afternoon in May, and as he walked from the pier, he realized that Saturday closing had begun and he was free until Monday morning.

"Go where?" he asked himself.

The club, of course, bridge until (Continued on page 122)

Illustrated by Ernest Fuhr

Until

By

McCready

Huston



"What would you say to a little run in my car some afternoon?" she asked.

IN that thin pamphlet, "The Week in Jonesville," the Hotel New Trianon occupied many lines of black-face type. Under Monday's heading stood the weekly luncheon of the Lions, in the Olde Englishe Inn, down cellar. Tuesday brought the Kiwanians together in the Pink Room. The Exchange Club ate Thousand Island dressing in solemn conclave on Wednesday. The Jonesville Rotary sang "Lil' Liza Jane" every Thursday. The Optimists took the curse off Friday. Saturday, being sacred to golf at the Jonesville Country Club, football games in the Jonesville University stadium, or fishing, had no luncheon; but frequently the Women's Club or the League of Women Voters prodded chocolate éclairs and listened to some imported speaker.

So in the announcements of every day the New Trianon held equal place with the New Paradise Theater and the New Palace dancing hall, and eclipsed without any difficulty the social and civic activity record of such Jonesville hotels as the Commercial and the Metropole. And the New Trianon was the only hotel in Jonesville that proclaimed a dinner concert on Sunday evenings, and dancing, through the week, in the Norse Room, until closing.

In fact, loyal members of the Jonesville Chamber of Commerce were quite certain that no other city of its size offered as much downtown metropolitan life, day and night. That touch in the advertisements, "Dancing until closing," was soul-satisfying.

It was on the dancing that Armand le Brun came in. Armand was the leader of the New Trianon Orchestra, and Le Brun's Jazzateers; and no fiddler was more lissome than he; nor could

any wear a snappy Tuxedo, from the Olde Cambridge Shoppe, with more deadly effect.

Armand le Brun was the best jazz bandmaster between Chicago and New York. Traveling men who stopped at the New Trianon said so; and Jonesville merchants who went to New York for their spring and fall buying found nothing in the furious Forties to compare with him. Even collegians and world-weary prep-school lads, dancing to the strains of Le Brun's band during vacation, were forced to place their

languid approval on his ardent bowing. Not even the conductor of the symphony orchestra of nineteen pieces that played the pictures nightly in the New Paradise had a wrist that could equal Armand's. And as for his waist! And his legs! And his hair!

When Armand led his nine accomplices in their own version of "The Thirty-third Street Blues," the men about town who made the Central Soda Grille their club could not understand how Isham Jones managed to keep his head above water.

So "The Week in Jonesville," distributed free on the hotel desks and cigar counters, could reiterate in issue after issue the quality of the New Trianon and its orchestra in a way that made old-timers try to recall if, after all, the hotel had ever been just the Smith House, with a row of hickory chairs tipped back against the wall on the sunny side, and Mrs. Eph Smith, wife of the host, herself presiding in the kitchen. The Mastodon Hotels Corporation had made over the Smith House as completely as the luncheon clubs, the Chamber of Commerce, the Merchants' Association and the Retail Credit Men had made over the town itself.

Armand le Brun was not his real name. He had taken it from a motion-picture screen in Nappanee, Indiana, where he had been born a Smalley. He had been taking the interurban car to Jonesville to play for the dances of the Old Bachelors' Club for only one season when he saw that the time was ripe for somebody to step in and become the Paul Whiteman of that thriving city. So

Closing

he stepped; and as he transferred his personal and professional wardrobe from Nappanee to a furnished room in Jonesville, he became Armand le Brun.

A village boy who grows up on stale copies of the *Billboard* does not need to be told that a professional name means something in the profession. Noodles Simpson, the pianist of the Jazzateers, might stick to his homely name. Noodles, who played by ear and faked everything, had no ambition beyond Jonesville; but Smalley, at twenty-four, intended to go higher. He pictured himself in five years standing on a concert platform before five thousand rapt souls and playing "Souvenir," by Drdla, as an encore to a big number by Sarasate. He intended to play concertos for fifteen hundred dollars a night; and so he had the name all ready and waiting.

As he stood in the Norse Room tonight and led his men

Since his memorable stories of small-city life began to appear in this magazine, the author of this characteristic tale has had various interesting inducements made him to pack up his old kit bag and hie him eastward to New York. But—wisely—he refuses to be lured from the Indiana town of which he writes so appreciatively in the present story, and in which he functions as editorial writer on the local paper.

through "Wonderful One," he followed critically with a half-closed eye a girl who for three evenings in succession had danced every number with the same man. She bothered him.

Considering that Armand intended, at the apex of his concert career, to woo with his bow a wondrous creature embodying all the allurements of Gloria Swanson, Norma Talmadge, Barbara La Marr and Corinne Griffith, this dancing girl bothered him a lot.

There wasn't much to her. Armand, resting to let Noodles play the refrain through, could not imagine her exercising a pair of Russian wolf-hounds in the royal gardens he expected to provide as a setting for his bride who was to be Norma, Gloria, Barbara and Corinne all in one. This girl was small, light and blonde. She was letting her hair grow in, and Armand, who was an exquisite of such things, saw that she was doing it beautifully. Her eyelashes, he noted, as Noodles finished and he raised his bow



Mr. Kraus threw up his hands. "I am sorry. It is no use going on."

"You have a gift for this sort of thing," Herr Koenig said. "You ought to capitalize your chance."

to conclude the number, curved upward and were darker than her hair. Her mouth was a red splash against pallor, the precise shade that told the violinist that she was sophisticated to the difficult degree that makes the beholder wonder if the wearer's color is really artificial. She was just a pretty bit of fluff. Ordinarily, Armand would not have noticed her. But he did.

For two nights, now, she had danced every dance until closing and then had disappeared in a flutter of silver cloak and a twinkle of brocade slippers, but not until she had flashed the leader a little smile and had applauded the last notes for an entrancing moment.

Tonight, Armand decided, looking across the room at her, he would give her something to think about, a suggestion of his real quality. So, before the final foxtrot, he conferred authoritatively with Noodles and spoke a word to the other musicians. Then, as the fifty or more dancers stood and sat around the room, he took his position and with Noodles furnishing a sometimes original accompaniment, played "The Young Prince and Young Princess" by Rimsky-Korsakoff. He held his violin in the grip he had seen Fritz Koenig himself use, and as he played, he fixed his musing brown eyes on the pretty bit of fluff who sat tapping a gold slipper across the room.

The finish of Armand's solo was not greeted by deafening applause. An uncertain, polite flutter by the girls, and some solemn clapping by their sleek youths disposed of the unexpected great music. Noodles, grinning over the piano keys, showed his instinctive showmanship by covering the awkward moment with the opening chords of "The Limehouse Blues." The dancers swung into movement over the white maple floor, and Armand, sensing a necessity for closing the evening at his best, drew out all there was in the swaying Jazzateers.

He was laying his violin in its case when a touch on his arm caused him to look up. The partner of the bit of fluff was standing beside him. With a black, tight-waisted overcoat buttoned as neatly as an undertaker's working-clothes, and a bright plaid scarf wrapped under his pinkly massaged chin, he was a perfect Jonesville man-about-town. Under his arm he carried a flat, hard hat, and he wore gray silk gloves. He contemplated Armand dismally with light, weak-looking eyes.

"Whatdya say to a cuppa coffee? My sister says I should bring you." He moved the crook of his elbow toward the door. Armand glanced toward the entrance. The girl of three successive evenings was waiting there, wrapped in a blue and silver cloak.



"Why, yes, I don't mind," he consented. "I oughta go home and work on some numbers I'm getting up for recital—"

The other interrupted: "I'm Grover Irwin. She's my sister Alys. We like your stuff. We know all the big musicians—met Isham Jones in Chicago last month. We know Ben Bernie, Lopez, Zez Confrey. Alys thinks you're as good as they come. She wants to meet you, so she said I should bring you."

The youth spoke without expression. His voice was almost as vacant as his face. Armand, on his way to the locker-room for his coat, decided they must be the Irwin kids, children of Amadee Irwin, of the Central Union Trust Company, over on the Boulevard of Belleau. They ran around with the Gracies and the Country Club set. He had read frequently in the *Banner's* society column of their arrivals and departures from and to school and New York. Evidently they made a specialty of dance orchestras. The brother certainly was more than a bit dumb, he concluded, as he strolled beside him to join the sister at the entrance of the Norse Room. She smiled, and stepping forward, put out a hand.

"I'm crazy about the way you do 'Wonderful One' and 'From One Till Two.' Grover and I didn't expect to find such music in Jonesville."

Looking down at those lashes that curved upward from blue eyes, Armand wondered if he should not include her in his composite of Swanson, Talmadge and La Marr; but he did not want to appear too interested.

"The fellows do pretty well. I'd like to get hold of a good double bass. You can't do much without a tuba."



They turned in at the doorway of the Coffee Shoppe and found a table. Grover tipped back in his chair, his hands thrust in his coat pockets, staring gloomily out the window. But Alys leaned across to Armand. "What would you say to a little run in my car some afternoon?" she asked.

The violinist, answering her look, decided to start all over with a new composite to lead wolf-hounds on a tether through Greek gardens.

Double marmalade toasted sandwiches and coffee were ordered by Grover in his listless monotone. When the waiter had shambled away, he added: "I've been studyin' the sax, but Father says as soon as I'm twenty-one I gotta sell it and go into the bank, or else get outa the house."

Alys indicated that her brother, having served his purpose of introducing Armand, could be ignored.

"Jonesville wont be able to hold you long," she said. "You'll be making phonograph records and broadcasting just like Paul Biese inside of a year. You could take your band on the Orpheum Circuit now."

Armand frowned at the battery of coffee urns.

"That don't interest me. I'm gonna do recital work. Look at Jascha Heifetz an' Toscha Seidel; they're both young fellows."

"Classical, huh?" Grover grunted.

"Dance orchestra work is all right for some. I could have three or four bands now, and send 'em around to diff'rent towns under my name. I could make big money. But an artist can't do that. I'm gonna make my débo in Carnegie Hall one o' these

days. I'll play you some o' the stuff I've picked out for my programs some-time."

"What was that you played to-night? I've heard Kreisler play that."

"Oh, that's just a little thing by this here Russian, Rimsky-Korsakoff. I'm workin' up a program—Bach, Grieg, Brahms. I'll have all the big names."

Attacking a skyscraper of toast and marmalade, Alys advertised a competent dentist. Grover said darkly:

"If I could play 'Rose-Marie' on my sax, I'd go into the bank to-morrow an' die with a smile on my face."

"Classical stuff don't start my saliva either," remarked Alys. "Anybody who can play, 'Who's Sorry Now?' like

you do, can let Heifetz have Carnegie Hall and the Auditorium too."

Across the table she let her curiously fringed eyes do what Nature had intended; and Armand, gazing into them, saw the long road of the concert violinist stretching ahead and found it rocky.

"You should care what I do!" he said finally, and his tone was full of meaning. "Your dad wouldn't have you playing around with a musician."

"Dad," replied the girl levelly, "has always let me have anything I wanted."

She let that sink in. It seemed to Armand that he heard Grover's voice saying from a great distance:

"And he wont even let me play the sax."

THE violinist from Nappanee remembered snuggling against fur in the rear of a coach and being put down in a daze at the door of his rooming-house.

Before he closed the door of the coach, Alys leaned forward and said:

"Some day I want you to tell Dad about the chances of organizing three or four orchestras and booking them all yourself. Of course, that wouldn't need to interfere with your career."

To Mrs. Amadee Irwin, seated behind the coffee-tray in the breakfast-room of the Firs, Avalonia Boulevard, there was nothing strange in the request of her daughter Alys that a hearing by Fritz Koenig, the violinist, be arranged for young Armand le Brun. In fact, she beamed.

"Why certainly, daughter. Mother is pleased to see you so thoughtful of others. Brother, straighten up and eat your Toasted Gritties! I'll call up Mrs. Grater right after breakfast. I know she will be glad to help me out. I'll be so proud to tell Papa when he gets home from Cleveland."

Papa was a chronic convention delegate. This time the occasion was the convocation of the Honorable Order of Coots. Being Jonesville's principal banker and the creditor of nearly everyone in the city, Amadee was a member of every club and society. This particular order took care of special cases like Amadee's by having the honorary degree of Old Coots. Amadee was an Old Coot.

He and Mrs. Irwin had observed for several weeks the association of Alys with Armand le Brun. Alys had handled her mother by presenting Armand as a young artist with a future on the platform, and had maneuvered Mrs. Irwin into the pleasant, comfortable position of a patron of the arts. In her father's presence Alys had used different tactics. She had mentioned Armand's possibilities as the head of a syndicate of jazz bands, and had started the banker figuring on the backs of old envelopes. At the last dinner-table conference Amadee had computed Armand's potential income at fifteen thousand a year.

Mrs. Oliver P. Grater would be glad to do what she could, as Mrs. Irwin felt certain she would be when she began to purr at her over the wire. Mrs. Grater was the president of the Jonesville Friends of Art, under the auspices of which Fritz Koenig was to appear in the Jonesville Civic Auditorium that night; and in addition to being willing to demonstrate her power, she wished to keep Mrs. Irwin, a liberal subscriber, in the seat-purchasing humor. Besides, she had in mind the forthcoming exhibition of paintings by Tudor Smith, the interpreter of the Ozark mists; and she would like to put Mrs. Irwin under obligation to buy a picture. So she said she would see Herr Koenig at the Hotel New Trianon and try to arrange a hearing. She would call Mrs. Irwin back.

Alys was satisfied. She knew that Herr Koenig would be easy prey for two such habitual arrangers as her mother and Mrs. Grater.

It was Fritz Koenig's secretary and accompanist who came softly across the taupe carpet of the sitting-room to which Mrs. Grater had been admitted. He was a cold, quiet, businesslike person whose duty it was to protect the violinist from the harsh contacts of a cross-country tour. But not the least of his concerns was to have in his possession a certified check for fifteen hundred dollars three hours before the master's opening number; and as he knew in advance that his caller represented the parties of the second part of the day's contract, he was not surprised by the visit. But he was astonished by her request.

"Herr Koenig is much fatigued by the journey from Indianapolis," he countered. "He is resting now, and I have orders not to disturb him until just before the recital. I doubt that he would listen to your Jonesville artist today. Besides, his opinion would be of little value. He is a great artist but not a critic. In fact, Herr Koenig loathes critics."

THROWING open her fur coat, Mrs. Grater leaned forward in her chair, and pursed her small mouth. "I am sorry that Herr Koenig is tired," she said. "But this request comes from our best patron, a lady who takes six seats for the season."

Mr. Kraus shrugged; but Mrs. Grater went on steadily toward her point:

"We have booked Herr Koenig now for three seasons in succession. He is our great luxury. But some of the ladies on the board of the Friends of Art think that we should not try to afford him again. Or if we spend so much money on one number, we should, perhaps, book somebody else—Heifetz, for instance. You see my position."

Mr. Kraus had no difficulty seeing it and said so.

"If Herr Koenig could let Mr. Le Brun come up for five minutes, it would have much weight with the board. I see you have a piano here."

The secretary pondered. He did not relish the thought of the rage of his chief. On the other hand, he had visions of starting a concert-bureau of his own. Jonesville was good for ten thousand dollars for six recitals. He loathed the woman, but he had a wife and six children in East Orange.

As an artist, the accompanist of the great Fritz Koenig, he would have enjoyed leading pudgy little Mrs. Grater to the elevator, snubbed and defeated; as a business man he was compelled to force a polite smile.

"Let me have your telephone-number," he said. "I cannot

waken the master, but later, if I have the right opportunity, I will approach him. If I am successful, I shall telephone to you, and you may bring your young man."

He rose, feeling he had done his duty to both his artistic and his commercial natures, and opened the door. He did not want to listen to Mrs. Grater's song of victory.

"I'll be glad to bring your kindness before the board at the next regular meeting," the president of the Friends of Art murmured creamily, giving Mr. Kraus her hand and backing her fur coat into the corridor.

Two minutes later she squeezed into a booth on the lobby floor of the New Trianon to drop a nickel and tell Mrs. Irwin that the machinery of the Friends of Art was operating in her behalf, and she hoped to have the hearing arranged for the afternoon.

On Avalonia Boulevard, Mrs. Irwin replaced the receiver with a sigh of peace and called to Alys, upstairs:

"You had better notify Mr. Le Brun to be ready to play for Herr Koenig! I almost have it arranged for you, dear!"

"I did that yesterday, Mother," Alys replied, absently. "I knew you and Mrs. Grater would fix it." No other nineteen-year-old who ruled a Jonesville family exceeded Alys Irwin as a master mind.

MRS. AMADEE IRWIN, swathed in a full length of oppressive-looking gray fur, seemed almost to fill the hotel room which the lights, forced by winter twilight, suddenly reduced in size. She had come along pretending to chaperon Alys, but really to meet the great man. Lagging behind her was Grover, tall and solemn, a human protest against this sudden and unjust attention to music on the part of his family.

"Makes me sick," he had muttered to Armand in the elevator. "They wont even let me practice on my sax at home."

Mrs. Grater, not quite as large or as luxuriously furred as the wife of the president of the Central Union Trust Company, squeezed herself into a little hotel rocker that seemed determined to fly over backward. Alys, fair and cool-looking, was the only natural and calm person in the crowded room. So it seemed to Mr. Kraus, who received them gravely.

Armand was flushed and almost bewildered, uncomfortable in his Kampus Kut Klothes. The trousers, following the mode, were as full at the bottom as a sailor's, and as tight at the waist and hips. They seemed to him to be about to choke him, and he tried to overpower a riding Kollege Kollar with a perspiring forefinger. The room was insufferably hot, and even with Grover seated on the radiator, there was hardly room for Armand to set up his music-rack beside the baby grand piano.

Fritz Koenig had not appeared. Armand took his violin from the case and looked unhappily and inquiringly at Mr. Kraus. Alys stood behind her mother's chair, her eyes bright and her lips parted slightly. Knowing something of the gulf between a good dance violinist and a great virtuoso, she wondered if Armand really thought he had a chance.

"Your score?" Mr. Kraus slipped along the piano bench and held out a hand to Armand, who began fumbling at a briefcase in search of some soiled sheets of music. He put the piano part before Mr. Kraus and his hand trembled.

"Ah, you know Iljinski?"

It was Mr. Kraus' first expression of real interest in the proceedings, which had begun to be horrible to him. He longed for the night and the first chords of Herr Koenig's recital.

"I am astonished to find this in Jonesville," he added.

Mrs. Irwin laughed nervously. "Now, isn't that funny? I thought Iljinski was a dancer. Didn't we see him with the Russian bally in Chicago?"

Mr. Kraus eyed her coolly. "Possibly you are thinking of Nijinski, madame?"

Before Mrs. Irwin could reply to that, Alys pinched her in the fold of soft flesh just under the shoulder-blade.

Le Brun explained the number to Mr. Kraus.

"The organist at the New Paradise Theater always plays this for people dying," he said huskily. "She gave it to me. It's a bear cause."

Mr. Kraus transferred his gaze from Mrs. Irwin to Armand.

"A what?" he queried.

"A bear cause," Armand answered, holding his violin between his knees and touching a piano-key for the pitch. "I guess it's Russian or something."

Mr. Kraus bent over the keys, pretending to flex his fingers with some vagrant passages. When he could look up again, he said:

(Continued on page 126)



"PICTURE FRAMES" was the title chosen by Thyra Samter Winslow for her collected book of brilliant short pieces. So too in this striking story the reader sees, sharply defined as a colorful figure-painting in its frame, the strange life of Rhoda Grant.

"I'm surprised you aren't married, Rhoda. You've been the most popular girl in town."

R. P. LLEN
C. OLEMAN
1925

The Supreme Insult

By

Thyra Samter Winslow

Illustrated by

Ralph Pallen Coleman

FROM the time she was married, Rhoda Grant was jealous of her husband. Her jealousy was not the fiery kind that bursts into spectacular display after a party, and it certainly was not caused by anything that Howard Grant ever did. Rhoda knew that. She even recognized that her jealousy must spring from some inferiority within herself, even while she couldn't account for it. How could she, Rhoda Grant, feel inferior? If anything, she felt slightly superior to most of the people with whom she came into contact. In a way, however, this jealousy fitted in nicely with Rhoda Grant's philosophy of life and her philosophy of marriage.

"The trouble with most women," Rhoda would tell her friends, "is that they let themselves go after they are married. That's why their husbands lose interest in them. You bet I'll never let myself go. You've got to keep up an illusion, a 'hoop-la,' if you want your marriage to be a success. You have a better time, too—it's worth the trouble."

In spite of her jealousy, however, Rhoda Grant was a bit complacent about her marriage. She felt that she had a right

to be. She "had done well;" and in her more introspective moods, she admitted to herself that she had done much better than she had expected to do. Still, why shouldn't she have done well? Hadn't she been the most popular of the three Morris girls? The gayest, the prettiest, the most sought-after? But she knew well enough that sometimes you do not get the husband who seems a rightful reward for your attractiveness. For a while she had feared that she would not get the husband she deserved—nor any husband at all. Yet she had got Howard Grant.

Rhoda was the youngest and most attractive of the Morris sisters, and was spoiled in proportion. Jessie and Mildred were buxom, hearty girls who took the world lightly enough, discussing trifles at length and completely ignoring everything larger than trifles. They were popular in a way, though they made no great efforts toward popularity. The men they knew thought of them as jolly girls, and were intimate without being affectionate or annoying. After finishing the local high school, the girls made no attempt at anything resembling higher academic education or more extensive culture. They entered such social

life as their position in Lucas City entitled them to. Their healthy charms, their rather strident giggles, their good nature, made them popular. They were at their best in a crowd, and young men were more apt to confide their heart-affairs to them than to grow amorous.

When Jessie, the oldest of the sisters, was twenty-two, she met Joe Higgins, who traveled for a wholesale hardware company out of Chicago, and six months later she and Joe were married and left Lucas City.

Mildred, a couple of years later, married Jerome Myers, who, through his father, became half owner of the New York Store. This was an excellent match financially. Jerome Myers built a large Dutch Colonial house out on Free Bridge Road, the new section of Lucas City, and Mildred soon learned to drive her own car.

Jessie had two children, though on her infrequent visits to Lucas City she left them in charge of Joe's mother in Chicago. Mildred had three children, round, rosy duplicates of herself and Jerome. Jerome belonged to the Lucas City Country Club, was a Rotarian, a member of the Commercial League, the Masons, the Elks and the Boost Lucas City Association. Everyone admitted he was a fine fellow, but that he ought to be careful with his diet, because his extra weight wasn't at all healthy for a man of his years—so much fat affects the heart, you know.

Rhoda had always been more popular than her sisters, and in a different way. She was the one with whom the boys had little love-affairs. She was always the center of a miniature intrigue—"he said," and "she said," buzzing back and forth in the conversations. She was far more careful of her appearance than her sisters. She was the smallest in the family, a bit plump, but with excellent skin. She had large, inexpressive, rather flat-looking blue eyes, a straight nose just a trifle too small in profile, a chin inclined to fullness, and naturally waved light hair. She wore fluffy thin dresses, even for sports, preferring ruffles to straight lines, and she rather overdid a certain girlishness in her appearance by wearing large, floppy hats when a small toque would have been more suitable. Rhoda had learned a pretty helplessness, achieved by dropping her eyes and by a flutter of her hands. She never quite knew what to do in emergencies. She couldn't bear rough walks and liked to have things done for her—her handkerchief picked up, a chair moved with its back to the window, a curtain adjusted. Lucas City young men, untrained to delicate ladies, liked doing things for Rhoda. If she had been of the more buxom type, like her sisters, they would never willingly have lent themselves to her scheme of things; but Rhoda, little and blonde and big-eyed, was able to create conditions somewhat as she wanted them.

Rhoda expected to marry young,—even before her sisters,—but the few men who were serious enough to be matrimonial chances proved impossible in every way—poor clerks, young men from the farms who had moved to Lucas City, or traveling salesmen. She could do better than Jessie, better than Mildred, even—what a stupid fellow Jerome was; she couldn't talk to him five minutes without falling asleep!

After her sisters were married, Rhoda was more popular than ever. She had her own little court. On Sunday evening there was always a group of young men on the Morris front porch, with Mrs. Morris in the kitchen, perspiring a bit. She was rather a heavy woman, who was always complaining of her feet—deformed in an age when small shoes seemed necessary. She didn't mind "throwing together" a supper for Rhoda's admirers—hot biscuits, homemade jam, cold roast or chicken that was left



from the midday meal.

The boys always brought Rhoda boxes of her favorite chocolates,—she rather sneered at one-pound boxes of candy,—new music which she played not at all well, faking the chords for the bass, and corsage bouquets which she wore in town the next day. Rhoda always took great pains with her appearance—she felt that part of her popularity was due to the way she looked, and no doubt she was right. Her hair was always fresh and waved softly around her face. The little collars of her dresses,—the dresses themselves, for that matter,—were immaculate. She bought the best perfumes she could afford and used them rather generously, daubing scent behind her ears and on her chin and hair and gown before joining her masculine friends. She took great pains with her shoes, too. She was rather proud of her feet, and although she did not force them into shoes far too small for them in the way her mother had, still, her shoes were tight enough so that at the end of an evening of dancing her feet frequently hurt her rather badly.

Rhoda was not much interested in anything outside of Lucas City, but she always glanced at the evening newspaper when her father brought it home. They took the morning paper too, but she never had a chance to see it, for her father took it with him, and she was never up early in the morning. She usually looked over the more popular current books and magazines. She didn't enjoy reading, especially, but she felt that she ought to keep up with things so that she could understand men when they talked—



At parties she would glance around to see what Howard was doing....jealous of every woman he looked at.

Presently, to her surprise, Rhoda found that she was twenty-four years old—and not married. She had never been in love, really, but probably could have persuaded herself that she loved any of half a dozen men she knew if they had made serious advances. She must get married! Twenty-four was old in Lucas City. She looked over her masculine acquaintances and found that Roger Boment was the greatest catch. She definitely liked Roger—had always liked him.

She used all of her feminine wiles on Roger. She giggled. She sat near him so that he could smell her hair. She leaned close to him when they danced together—and that was not the day of close dancing. She felt that Roger Boment was becoming definitely fond of her. He had always been fairly attentive, and she was confidently waiting for a declaration or for a chance to force a declaration, when Agnes Hill came back to Lucas City. In high school Agnes had been Rhoda's best friend. Agnes had gone to Chicago to study art, after

could join in with little opinions or ask the right question. Easy enough to entertain a man when you know how to get him started talking about an interesting subject—interesting to him, that is.

At parties Rhoda always had a little group of men around her. When she went downtown of an afternoon, she was sure to meet some man who would buy her a cooling drink at the Ice Palace and walk home with her chatting about nothing at all. Dainty and pretty—her rather flat blue eyes always round with wonder over something that was being said to her, going to parties, gossiping, busy over nothing at all, Rhoda's days passed pleasantly enough. . . .

discovering an unsuspected talent. After several years of study, she had got a job in a shop devoted to interior decoration, where she had talked glibly of color and of periods and styles in furniture. Now she had come back to Lucas City, and it was rumored that she was going to start a shop right there at home. However, the shop never materialized, for evidently Agnes had learned a lot of things in Chicago, and they enabled her to capture Roger Boment. Agnes and Roger were engaged three months after Agnes got back home, and married two months later. Agnes was still Rhoda's best friend, and Rhoda never let her nor anyone else suspect that she had tried (Continued on page 144)

Proven Pudding

By Samuel Merwin

Illustrated by
Lester Ralph

The Story So Far:

THEY, Bee and Lou, were sharing a Greenwich Village apartment and were living their own lives with a vengeance—and a difference. For Bee, who was a chorus girl about to lose her job, was steadfastly refusing the conventional and advantageous marriage which successful young Fred Kendall urged upon her. But Lou, the capable business girl, had an "arrangement" with an actor named Leslie Perkins—a sort of trial-marriage affair, it was.

And now to this ménage came two other young flames of revolt: one was Wilbur Sayles, who had been dominated by his mother to the point of spiritual extinction, and whom maternal-minded Lou was striving to rescue. The other was quaint little Delia Bradley, an old-home-town friend of Bee's, something of a poetess, who had fled provincialism and had come to learn the gospel of freedom as preached in Washington Square.

The girls took in both waifs. That night there was a party, with synthetic gin and the other adjuncts of 1925 Bohemia. And to the party came one Arthur Rockwell, a romantic figure of a poet who had been one of pretty Delia's distant adorations. . . . When the party was over, she had accepted his matter-of-fact invitation to call upon him at his rooms next day.

Lou and Bee continued their respective philanthropies: At the cost of a misunderstanding with Leslie Perkins, Lou persevered in her endeavor to brace up young Sayles—even consented to a pretended engagement with him in order to help him achieve freedom. And Bee obtained a position for Delia through Fred Kendall, even as she lost her own place at the theater and after failing to find another took a temporary job as waitress in a local tea-room, the Peacock Feather. But she was anxious about little Delia, who was continually in the company of the unscrupulous Rockwell: the poet, Bee knew, was planning to go with an exploring party to Central America, and would simply cast off poor Delia when he left.

Bee lost her place at the Peacock Feather and could find nothing else—except an impossible job in a near-nude living picture stunt at a *revue*. And then Lou was offered a high salary to go on the staff of a moving-picture producer in California. Bee had decided to go with her in a hazard of new fortunes on the Coast—when Delia called on the phone to tell Bee she had taken poison. Bee had brought the apparently dying girl to their apartment and had summoned physician and nurse when Lou arrived. (*The story continues in detail:*)

BEE was clearing off the couch. The books and pictures she stacked in a corner. "You'll have to sleep here," she said. "I brought out some of your things. They're in the wicker chair."

Lou, perched on a corner of the center table, watched her. "What do you figure you're going to do?" Both voices were hushed.

THINGS artistic have a way of moving at a great speed in these days, as is evidenced by the recent history of this story. By the time the magazine containing the second installment had reached our readers, Mr. Merwin had received three offers for the motion picture rights of "Proven Pudding," and two for the dramatic rights. So there is every reason to expect that before long the play will have been produced, and close on its heels, the film also.

"Oh, I sha'n't get to bed to-night. You see, that doctor wanted two nurses, but I've been helping this one, watching just what she did, and I could call her in a pinch."

"Don't be silly, Bee. We'll get another nurse."

"Well—I've had to consider the cost a little. No telling what it will run to. And I feel equal to anything. Honest."

Louise lit a cigarette as an aid to thought.

"We'll have another nurse. What's the doctor's number?"

"I wrote it down. It's under the phone. Just move it, if you really—"

Louise promptly disposed of that matter. Then she remarked, still puzzling her way through a confusion of impulses and swift thoughts: "We've got to talk. Sit down. You make me nervous." Bee obeyed. "How about her folks?"

"She begged me not to tell them."

"Yes, but—"

"I know. We've got to."

"Of course. Have you got the address?"

"No." Bee considered the problem. "I wonder—maybe it's in one of my college books. The Annual, or something. They're in my trunk—in there." She indicated the bedroom. "Though come to think of it, her father's initials wouldn't be there, or the street address."

"I'd figure out some way to wire as soon as you can. Her people have rights, you know."

Bee nodded. "They'll come tearing down here tomorrow. It'll be rather awful—coming into this tragic mess."

"I don't imagine they have any spare money."

"No. Delia had to work, you know, up there. She partly worked her way through college, too. I'll tell you, Lou—of course, I've been thinking things over pretty fast today. You've got to help with this."

"Of course."

"You can send something back from California. Thank heaven you've got a real job. I'd have gone ahead, anyway. I had no choice. But I've banked on you."

"I don't know that I'll go to California. I've got a perfectly good job here."

"Of course you'll go!"

"The idea was to go together."

"Nonsense. Of course it would have been nice, but you can't throw down a chance like that. You've got to go on."

"The fun's gone out of it." Lou watched the smoke curling up from her cigarette. After a little she remarked, musingly—a casual sentence that was no more than a chip floating by on the flood of her thoughts: "This is Thursday night." She pulled herself together and glanced at the watch on her wrist. "Thirty-three. Hum! I thought it was about seven."

"I'm going up after Arthur about five, Lou. He ought to turn



— LESLIE RALPH —

"No, Leslie," she said gently. "I'm sorry. I loved you. . . . But it's over."

up at Joe's toward the end of the afternoon. I wonder if you'd mind sticking here."

"Of course I'll stay—though I'm still doubtful of that move."

"Well,"—Bee got up,—"it's what I get out of watching Delia and thinking about what she was able to say. There's just one thing that will put a little fight into her, or a little hope, at least; and that's marriage. It's all she can see."

"Oh!" mused Lou. Then: "He'll never do that."

"Perhaps he'll have to. One thing I've been thinking—I'd like some practical advice—oh, about the law, all that. But I can't think of anybody, unless it's—"

Lou interrupted quickly: "Fred Kendall?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Mr. Hargrove would be perfect, but after what I've gone through with him today, I don't know about asking this of him."

"I'll try Fred." Bee came over to the telephone, then turned to her friend with that intently sober look and remarked gently: "I've been a crazy sort of child, I'm afraid. A thing like this shakes you so. Of course I'll talk with him. He *is* practical, and he probably can help." She called his apartment.

"Funny," she said, a hand clapped over the receiver, "he's moved. They don't appear to know where."

"Try that airplane company."

"Of course." They had the address. "Hm! Over in West Fifty-sixth Street. He has tumbled in the world." It took an hour to find his voice over the wires of the complicated city. During that time Lou busied herself rehanging the pictures and straightening out the room. The doctor appeared again, followed shortly by the second nurse. At five Bee hurried uptown to meet Fred.

The lights in the hotel lounge were pleasantly soft, and the deep upholstery soothing. Bee, fighting ease, chose a stiff little chair by a writing-table. From the restaurant came the clink of spoon on cup, and voices. A few of the earlier diners drifted in—fortunate theatrical folk, engaged in plays that hadn't yet closed. Bee recognized a face or two. An ingénue with exquisitely slim legs sat opposite in a huge blue chair—like Bee's grim self, awaiting a man. Could this ingénue, too, feel grim behind the rouge and the doll mask? Perhaps. Bee, indeed, would have nodded with dark understanding had she been told just then that this pretty little thing was the mother of a child of six and was at the moment shrewdly considering a third marriage.

A slim young man in flannels (a few weeks too early) and white shoes passed, swinging a Panama hat. A handsome face marred by a sensual and carelessly cruel mouth—hair marcelled and oiled. Without a flutter she placed him, a rising young screen hero. She resented him, as she had resented the overstuffed chairs. He went on to the coat-room, gave up the costly Panama; then, standing in a shadow, he glanced back at her. The cruel mouth curled upward a very little at the corners, and veiled invitation lurked in the impudent eyes. A faintly responsive smile, and he'd be over. He buttoned his coat about his figure, and she saw the bulge of a flask on his hip. Well, he'd selected her and not the ingénue. So the blackness of her spirit didn't show. That was just as well. There was even a little strength in the thought. She'd doubtless have to pick her opening phrases with Fred. It was no time to mince words. He must understand bluntly. She'd only told him, over the wire, that a dreadful thing had happened and she needed a little practical help.

The hero still lingered, covering his fatuously lascivious thought by bantering cheaply with the uniformed hat-boy. If he should make bold to come over, she'd put him down with a word. Sink him without trace. "The spirit, sir, is one of tragedy."

The Fred who appeared a moment later she was a little slow in recognizing. A soberly dressed man, the restless eyes subdued, a slightly defensive smile. She didn't grasp the change in him, really, till later; now that desperate battle for Delia's poor little wistful life held and colored her thoughts. She said quickly: "Let's get a table, Fred. I haven't a minute to waste. Order tea if you like. I couldn't eat." And the moment the waiter was disposed of, she laid the case before him, concretely. What could be done about Arthur? She wanted vigor, law, force. And she demanded practical wisdom. No sense in acting weakly. She meant business.

Fred's dull eyes focused on her slowly at first. He was distraught. In this subdued mood he seemed a friend. Bee's somewhat emotional but always energetic brain couldn't attend to more than one complete thought at a time; and she could forget quickly and heartily. She was forgetting much now. Fred wasn't at all prosperous and aggressive. He was gentle. His presence and his mood were helpful. He asked a few questions. Where did Delia get the poison? Bee recalled that she had instinctively asked that herself. It was a bottle of Arthur's. Fred nodded thoughtfully over that. "We may want that bottle," he said. "You'd better look for it tonight. It's probably still in her room." Then he glanced at a bare wrist; and then, with a slight tightening about the mouth, asked the time. "I'm wondering," he said, "if you'd let me go with you to find this skunk."

It was the first bit of the old color that had crept into his speech. Come to think of it, he'd appeared as a rather drab young man. But that personal reflection swiftly passed. There wasn't time or room for it.

"I'd like it if you would," she replied.



"You say you're sending for her people, Bee?"

"I must, of course—as soon as I can get their address. Delia was set against it."

"But the girl is dying. They don't know. Yes, you must."

"I don't know what we can say to them, Fred. It'll be awful."

"A good deal depends on what we may be able to do with Rockwell. Let's get after him now. After that, I'll call her home town on the telephone and start a search up there. We ought to run them down during the evening. The telephone people will help in a case like this. There won't be so many Bradleys there. Let's go now."

Bee lingered only to call the rooms from a booth and ask after Delia. The report to Fred was, as they hurried out into Forty-fourth Street: "She's still alive, poor kid. That's all the nurse will admit now."

"I suppose it's possible," mused Fred, "in her present state, that a quick marriage might save her life."

"That's it, of course," said Bee. "As it stands, she's crushed. She'd literally rather die. An army of doctors and nurses couldn't put the will to live into her."

Chapter Eighteen

ARTHUR'S friend Abeloni was at home. Arthur was looked for shortly. Bee and Fred waited in the living-room, talking a little in hushed voices, while Joe, who had a dinner engagement, excused himself to dress.



"You wreck that girl's life? All right, I'll wreck yours. Your whole career, mind."

"I imagine Arthur's in on that dinner," said Bee.

"He may think he is," was all Fred had to reply to that. Bee glanced quickly at his set face. Fred was different. Whatever experiences he might have been put through of late, had deepened him.

He spoke next: "I'm scheming it out, Bee. The thing to do is to put that right through—within the hour, if it's humanly possible. There are some difficulties. One of 'em's the license. But unless I'm mistaken, the old common-law thing still holds in this State. You know, a simple declaration in the presence of witnesses. Of course, we've got to have a minister. The thing must have the right ring to it. I know a mighty good chap. He was a fighting parson in France. I believe he'd come through when he understands the desperate nature of the case—that it's to save a life. It'll be simple enough to have a church ceremony afterward if she gets well—or even to do it again there in the rooms as soon as we can get the license. That's just details. The thing now is to convince the girl."

A telephone instrument stood on a desk near at hand. Fred drew it over, held it while he considered the problem quickly but surely from every angle; and then, without speaking further

to Bee, he called a number. Quietly he explained that there was a grave emergency to be met.

"It's all right," he said, hanging up the receiver. "He'll wait there for us to pick him up. I'll tell him the rest of it on the way down."

A few moments after that they heard a key in the lock. A door opened. Bee saw Arthur in the hall. He was calling cheerily for Joe. Then, slightly puzzled, he came to the door of the living-room. Bee, as she spoke to him and mechanically introduced him to Fred, took him in with a sinking heart. It was so clear that he hadn't a care. His was a will that had never for a moment been curbed. The discipline of art he knew, but no other. She had heard him say with some show of feeling that life is the most difficult of the arts, that it is to be lived as a poem. In his self-centered way he had exemplified his theory. She studied the handsome face with the dark cool eyes, the mouth chiseled like Apollo's, the long, graceful body, the column-like neck rising out of the softly rolling collar. Fred, who had risen, was studying him too—without a hint of emotion, measuring him.

It was an odd, long silence. Bee hadn't foreseen that she

would find herself in such a flutter. Alone, she would have stormed at him. And he might have outwitted her. She hadn't thought of that. She turned to Fred, who gravely spoke:

"Delia Bradley is at the point of death."

Arthur's cool eyes rested on him, then on Bee. "I'm very sorry to hear that," he said. His voice was gentle, as befitted the moment. He had always made a serious point of speaking the language beautifully. "Wont you sit down?"

"There's no time for that," Bee broke in, not too hotly—she was governed by Fred's firm strength—but with an earnest intensity that brought Arthur's eyes again to her. "We've come to take you right down there."

"But why?" Arthur dropped into a comfortable chair, produced a silver cigarette-case, and thoughtfully knocked a cigarette against it. "Pardon me—will you smoke?" Both shook their heads. "I'm sure I needn't tell you how sorry I am that Delia is ill. She is a dear girl. But I confess I'm a little at a loss to understand why you come at me in this way."

Bee, on her feet, moved toward him, heated enough now. "She has taken poison, Arthur. You know well enough the reason. There's just one thing left for you to do now."

"Just a moment." He had lighted the cigarette while she was speaking. "Just a moment, while I try to clear this up. Apparently your visit is a little—just a little—in the nature of a personal attack. I hardly know just what to say to that. So far as my having had an affair with Delia, that is true enough. I haven't the faintest desire to conceal it. But it was a perfectly understood thing. She wasn't a child. She went into it with her eyes open. She knew—she must have known—that I couldn't let myself into a permanent attachment of any sort. My business isn't with the routine of life. My business is with beauty. She knew that. I told her so, frankly. Now, Bee,—I really think you'd better sit down while we talk this over,—you spoke of the one thing left for me to do. May I ask what that is?"

BEE'S thoughts were drifting back to certain earlier remarks of her own. They were rather unsettling. But she spoke now positively enough. Whatever she may have thought or said in other days wasn't pertinent now. Only today was alive.

"You've got to marry her, Arthur."

Fred stood aside, still quietly studying and measuring the man. Joe, off in a bedroom, was softly humming a jazz tune.

Arthur leaned back, smoking in that reflective way, and bent narrowed eyes on Bee. "I'm rather puzzled," he said. "Now, just a moment. Understand that I'm as shocked and sorry as anybody could possibly be. It's evident that a really awful thing has happened. You'd never have come to me in this way otherwise. And of course I'll do anything I can to help. But what is this about marriage? You're an intelligent human being, Bee. What on earth has got into your mind? If the poor girl hasn't the brain or the understanding to live an enlightened modern life, the life she deliberately set out to live,—she told me that herself,—what on earth has marriage to do with it? Of course I won't marry her. You know better than that, Bee."

"Arthur,"—Bee's hands were clenched tightly at her sides; her eyes were filling,—"do you realize that that poor girl is down there in my bed actually dying? Do you realize that we've got to get word to her father and mother tonight and plunge them into the bitterest sort of tragedy? . . . No, listen to me! It doesn't matter now whether she's modern or not—or whether she hadn't a strong enough head for your sort of thing." Contempt crept into her voice at this point, but the poet didn't flinch. "A marriage will give her something to hold to. It is the one thing that may save her life. And it will save something for her father and mother—enable them to hold their heads up, at least."

"But, Bee—really—do I understand this? Are you proposing that I marry the girl to make an honest woman of her?"

"Yes. That. Exactly that."

"Strange."

"You've got to, Arthur."

"Pretty strong words, Bee."

"And now, tonight."

"Oh, really, Bee—"

"If you don't do it willingly, I'll make you."

"Threats?"

"Certainly. Threats."

"What a curious idea of marriage! H'm—sanctity! Understand, I'm as sorry as you that the poor child—"

"I shall wire your father this evening. And I shall make everything perfectly clear to him—"

"My father will hardly thank you for that. He knows perfectly well that I live my own life. For heaven's sake, Bee, try to face this thing rationally! I've always sensed a Victorian strain in you, but I never supposed you were—"

Fred, standing apart, watching the composure gradually slip from this cool, selfish brain, now spoke.

"It goes a great deal deeper than that, Bee. This man—"

"I shall really have to ask," interposed Rockwell, "in what capacity this gentleman is here."

FRED, however, gave Bee no opportunity to explain. "I am here to see that you do the right thing, Rockwell."

"The right thing!" Arthur's lips curled nervously into a smile as he considered the trite old phrase. "Really, Bee—"

"If you don't mind, Bee,"—she bowed to Fred's quietly deepening grip on the situation,—"I'll speak a little more plainly to this man." He turned on him. "Your father will have to know, naturally, Rockwell. You see, there's the little matter of money to be considered."

"Oh,"—contemptuously,—"money, eh?"

"Certainly." Fred's keen eyes hadn't missed the hint of a glistening moisture gathering just above the poet's temples. "For one thing, this doctoring and nursing is pretty expensive. Is it your idea to dump all that responsibility on these two girls?"

"Certainly not. I told you I'd do anything I could. When Delia came to me begging me to marry her, I simply had to refuse. It would have led to no happiness. It was simply unsound. That wasn't at all the sort of thing we'd decided. It was perfectly understood."

"Wait a minute," said Kendall. "She told you—everything."

"Why, really—"

"She told you. We know that."

"All right. She told me. Go on."

"And you turned her off. You knew she'd need help—a good deal of help."

"You have no right to say I turned her off. I refused to marry her, yes. But I wouldn't have let her suffer. It wasn't a question of money then. It wasn't time for money—nowhere near."

"Just a minute. You were booked to sail for Central America on Saturday—to be gone for one or two years."

"I am attached to the Birmingham Expedition, yes."

"Then how did you figure you were going to help her? You were planning not to be here."

"Bee,"—Arthur turned to her,—"I don't know who this man is, and I hesitate to seem discourteous to you, but I'm beginning to wonder if the situation isn't verging on an attempt at blackmail."

"This man is an old friend of mine, Arthur. He is here at my request. And if you don't stop wasting time and show us a little human decency, just a little, I won't undertake to be responsible for what he may do to you."

"Oh, really, Bee—"

"He's asking for trouble, Bee," said Kendall. "Let's get on with it. I'll give him all he wants. —You realize, Rockwell, that money, some money, is needed at once, and that you've got to produce it. Furthermore, you should realize that if you keep up your present attitude, you're going to need a lot more for legal expenses."

"Are you an officer of the law?"

KENDALL stood directly over him, looking firmly down into the now glistening and weakening face. "I'll answer that by telling you—and I want you to get this, get it right: I have friends in the District Attorney's office. We know that you gave her the poison—"

"Good God, man, I didn't give it to her to eat!"

"We know all about that. We know where you bought the bottle. You had to sign for it at the druggist's. Don't forget that. We know—"

"But—but—"

"I'm simply warning you, Rockwell. You're a very complacent young man—very self-willed. I won't waste on you now the epithets that come to my mind. I just want to get this clearly into your head: if you don't choose to go through with this marriage tonight, if you're not willing to take full human responsibility for this desperate situation, I'm going to put through one of the dirtiest criminal trials New York has seen since the Thaw case. You wreck that girl's life? All right, I'll wreck yours. Your whole career, mind. I'll crush you as completely as you've crushed her. And I'll smash the happiness of your parents, your whole family, exactly as you're smashing hers. Do you get it? Is it plain?"

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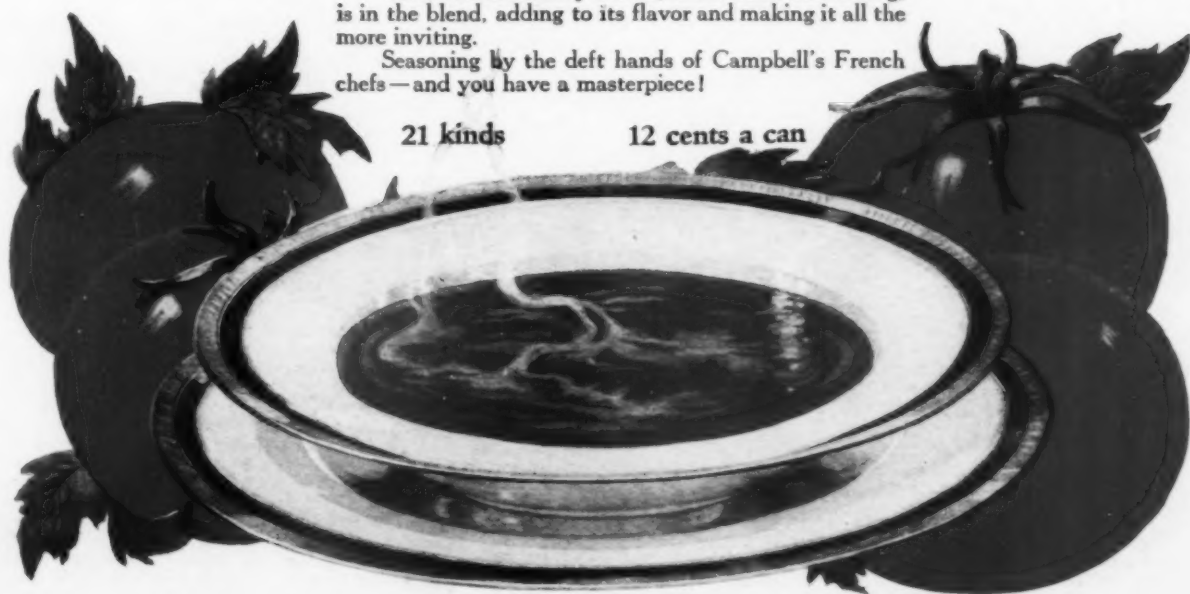
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Rockwell had gone limp in his chair. The color fled from his face, leaving only sweat and a look of fright. His cigarette had gone out. He dropped it, from limp fingers, into an ash-tray. He was muttering something about "absurdity" and "no case at all." Finally, with a wry and painful smile, he got this out: "Well, I seem to have nothing to say about this. But my God, I'm not a murderer. You both know I'm not."

"There are different sorts of murders," said Fred. "Will you marry her tonight?" "Why—yes, if it's—yes, I'm perfectly willing to do that."

"Understand, you don't make any Central American trips—not this season! You stick right here and take decent care of this girl. Is that clear?"

"Why, that's—well, yes, I agree to that." "All right." Fred's tension was not relaxed, however. "We'd better get right along, Bee. The parson will be waiting. We'll pick up a taxi. As for you, Rockwell, just one thing more: I've kept my temper up to now. I haven't told you what I think of you. For the girl's sake, I'm willing to do everything possible to save your face in this mess. But if you don't go through with it right, if you pull any more of that selfish stuff, I'm going to give myself the satisfaction of smashing in that pretty face of yours so it won't be recognizable for a long, long time."

Arthur, up now, made as if to bridle and face Fred out on that point, but the courage was all gone from him. Even the vanity which had fed his cool presence and his complacent brain as if it were an inexhaustible spring of life, was evaporated now into thin mist. Meekly he went out with them and drove off to his wedding.

Chapter Nineteen

ARTHUR'S manner, or a thin shell that resembled it, revived somewhat for the wedding. Fred, standing at the foot of the bed closely watching him, concluded that the man was acting, and even in a perhaps perverse sense taking pride in his performance. A crushed spirit seeking some obscure avenue in which a rag or two of self-respect could exhibit themselves. He bent tenderly over to help Bee explain to the suffering girl. And after the solemn sentences of the clergyman, and his own and Delia's responses (hers hardly more than a gasp), he bent reverently down and kissed her lips. Fred turned away at that.

Louise and Bee packed a suitcase then. They were leaving Arthur there in the rooms for the time, until Delia might be moved or—but they didn't voice the alternative. Fred carried the case across the Square to Delia's room. The three climbed the stairs silently together, and let themselves in with the key Bee had slipped into her bag when she'd taken Delia in the morning. Was it only this morning? The room was in disorder, just as it had been left. While the girls moved about hanging clothing away and putting things to rights, Fred looked about for the bottle. He found it on the bed, under a pillow, where the girl must have hidden it in her confusion—a small brown bottle with roughened edges, labeled "Poison." "Hm," mused Fred, "—corrosive sublimate. That's what I rather thought." And then, to Bee: "This isn't the strongest evidence in the world, but you girls had better hold on to it until we can put through the other ceremony with a proper license. It seemed to work pretty well on Rockwell today when I held it over him."

Lou, at a small desk in the corner, held up an envelope to the light from the one small window. "Here's her father's address," she said—adding, to no purpose: "He's in the grain and feed business in

Worcester. Perhaps you'd better wire him, Fred."

"Let's get some dinner first," put in Bee, who felt that she couldn't stay in this room an unnecessary minute. "Do you realize that it's only seven o'clock? I really think we'd better think this whole thing over, talk it out."

Fred nodded. "That's the conclusion I've been coming to, Bee. I had a little talk with the doctor. He thinks she'll live a couple of days, anyway. And before that time, he thinks he'll have some pretty definite guess as to her chances."

"You see," said Bee, "maybe we can work out a reasonable story. What I can't bear is the thought of bringing those poor people into this awful situation—as it looks now."

Fred nodded again. "Right, Bee. Iron the ugliness out of it, if we can. It'll be hard to keep much of the truth away from them, once they're here. We can't just say she took the stuff by mistake. Anyhow, we should be able to have the other ceremony by tomorrow afternoon. I'll go down with Rockwell in the morning for the license. I think that would be advisable."

"That would be wonderful, Fred, if you can spare the time."

"I'll spare the time, all right. Yes, that's best. We'll sleep over it. Tomorrow noon we can meet and plan it all out. Agree on our story. Tell this fellow exactly what he's to say and do. I've got to watch him a little, anyway, to make sure he brings his father in. I gather that he hasn't any money himself. I'll run along now, if you girls feel you're all right."

"Won't you eat with us?" Lou asked.

"No. No, really I—I've got to get up-town."

Bee let him out, then slowly, pursing her lips and frowning a little, closed the door.

"Well," said Louise gently, "Fred came through."

"Oh, yes, he came through. Arthur will do just as he's told. If he doesn't, I think Fred'll just about kill him. At least, that's what Arthur believes. If you'd been with us, you'd understand why."

"It was pretty clear, when you people came in, that there'd been a scene."

"I'll say it was a scene." Bee moved to the window, and looked out on the row of rectangular little back-yards and the iron fire-escapes and clotheslines with a few scrawny Chinese ailanthus trees reaching up through the dizzy tangle. "It's a side of Fred I'd never happened to see—though, come to think of it, he's handsome men enough, in business and in the army."

"I wonder what he's doing now."

"Haven't an idea. He didn't say."

THEY went over to the Peacock Feather and picked at a little food. Their conversation touched only obvious surfaces until Bee came out with this: "You're going Saturday, of course, Lou. Nothing to hold you now."

"No, I'm decidedly not going Saturday."

"But—"

"Mr. Hargrove had me on the telephone while you were uptown with Fred. His point now is that the only civilized thing I can do is to stay on for a month and break in somebody else. It didn't look so necessary to me—I mean, in the slack season. But I don't know. My judgment doesn't seem altogether normal lately. So many upsetting things. Probably I was just a little too eager to get away quickly."

"Will Des Plaines wait for you?"

"I don't know. Probably not. The cat jumps quick. But I thought I'd call up that other man tomorrow and see what he'll have to say about it. Kapek. I don't like doing it that way. Rather have him calling me. But he thinks it's settled, and of course I've got to break it to him."

THE schedule for the following day went through as Fred had planned. At noon the doctor ventured his first hope that Delia's life might be saved. It was at least a possibility. And late in the afternoon the marriage was repeated and legally recorded. A few of Arthur's friends were notified by telephone. Joe and Ralph sent flowers. There were even presents, rushed down to the Square by special messengers.

Once again the three walked across the Square together, Louise, Bee and Fred. At the steps of the house where Delia had lived, Fred stopped and wished them good-by.

"Oh, come, surely you can drop around to the Feather with us for a bite, Fred," Bee said.

"I can't," said Lou. "You two'll have to go alone." And then, answering Bee's glance of inquiry with a short laugh that had a touch of defiance about it, she added: "I'm going to have dinner with Leslie. Something or other he wants to tell me." With which she disappeared within the house.

Bee looked after her, thinking rather rapidly. But her thoughts were left unvoiced.

"I'll run along, Bee. Glad things seem to be working out this way. We'll just hope for the best all round. Be sure to let me know if there's anything I can do. You've got my number. I'm there up to eight-thirty mornings, and usually after seven or seven-thirty. If I don't go to a movie, I'm likely to be in reading or something."

"Fred, wait a minute." The brown-black eyes were fixed intently on his face. "I can't let you go like this. You've been perfectly corking. I don't know what we'd—" Bee interrupted herself at this point by throwing her arms about his neck, pulling his face down and kissing him.

He took her arms away, and looked down at her almost as if he were angry. Neither knew that he was holding her tightly by the elbows. They didn't so much as know that they were standing in a public street in the warm daylight of an afternoon in late spring.

"That wasn't quite fair, Bee."

"Well—"

"You know well enough what I—"

"I don't know anything about you, except that you left that company."

"That's funny. I take it you don't read the papers."

"Not very closely. What is this all about, Fred?"

"Remember that day I met you in Times Square?"

"Of course."

"I wanted you to go up Westchester way for dinner."

"Yes, I know. We fought like a couple of children."

"Well—look here, Bee, I can't talk about it. Some of it was in the papers the next day—some of it. What it boils down to is, I've been a good deal of a damn' fool, and I'm paying for it."

Abruptly he dropped her arms and walked away.

She moved part way up the steps, then turned and watched him go. He swung round the corner without looking back. She stood for some time without moving. Then, dis-trait, she went into the vestibule. Lou's had Delia's key; she'd have to ring to be let in. She looked at the row of mail-boxes in the wall, each with its push-button underneath and a name on a narrow bit of card. There it was, "Bradley." She lifted a hand toward the button. But instead of ringing, she let her hand fall. Slowly she moved out of the vestibule, down the steps and on to the corner. At the drug-store there she drank a glass of malted milk; then she crossed



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the Square to the subway station on its curbed-in island, rode up to Forty-second Street, and walked swiftly across to the Public Library.

Chapter Twenty

ATTENDANTS pointed the way to the newspaper room. That meeting with Fred must have taken place in April. About the middle of the month, she thought. The huge file was spread for her on a sloping desk. With an eagerness tinged with dread she turned the pages. Her quick eyes fell on this and that item she remembered. Crimes of violence, motor accidents, divorces—sprinkled everywhere, these, among the crowded columns of print; you saw so many such ugly items every morning that your sensibilities instinctively hardened and threw them off. The random nervous thought came that they were significant symptoms of a gravely disordered civilization. People didn't think, prosperous people. They didn't really think.

Her thoughts were darting this way and that. She knew she was strung up pretty high, but couldn't help that. Systematically, in an effort to direct her jerky brain into more orderly channels, she began with the issue of April 10th and went through the headlines column by column and page by page. Finally, right on a front page, she found it: "Two Killed Near White Plains. Drunken Motorist Held." And so on. Yes, it was Fred. Curious. She dimly remembered having glanced at that item at the breakfast-table one morning. It was familiar. But she hadn't happened on Fred's name. She took it in now more with her nerves than with her brain—"Damn it, I'm all nerves!"

There had been trouble first at a road-house. Fred, it was claimed, had attacked another guest. A man was with him, and two young women, said to be chorus girls. The proprietor stated that he had had to put them out. Apparently all four were drunk. They had had to carry one of the girls from the road-house to the car after dinner. Four people in that little roadster of his! Two in the rumble seat, doubtless, holding each other in while Fred hit it up to sixty miles an hour. Apparently Fred had undertaken to race another car, and while racing had struck a third machine that was parked by the roadside in a dark spot. It was the man and the girl in that third car who were killed. "In the early morning hours," read the story. "Hm!" mused Bee. "A little petting-party! The whole thing reads like 'The Dance of Death.' And yet I passed it over as commonplace the first time I saw it. Hm! Quite a world!"

She picked up her bag, mechanically powdered her nose, and went out. Apparently what she wanted next was a telephone. She felt flushed and hot, and curiously excited and depressed at the same time. Her eyes didn't see much of all that passed on the street. She had a queer sense of being alone in a crowded world, of venturing more doggedly than daringly into paths which, though new, had yet been trodden by millions of other lonely feet before hers. In a Sixth Avenue drug-store she found a telephone-booth. She called Fred. The operator said, "They don't answer," and dropped her nickel. She felt excitedly forlorn, and walked as hard as she could up Sixth Avenue. The grinding roar of the elevated trains overhead gratified her deeply primitive mood. At his street in the Fifties she turned over to Broadway; and there, from another booth, called him again. He was in. Her heart leaped.

"Hello, Fred," she heard herself saying. "It's Bee."

"Oh, hello, Bee."

That was all he said. He didn't help her. She waited, feeling a confused fool. An impulse came to slam the receiver back on the

hook and walk away. But she couldn't do that. She felt tied, helpless—beaten, really. In a minute she'd be crying, if she wasn't careful.

"What are you doing, Fred?" That was banal enough. But it was all she could think of to say. She stamped a small foot impatiently. He couldn't hear that.

"Why, nothing. I just came in. Been out for a bite. Anything the matter?"

"No. I—"

"There's something I can do, Bee. What is it?"

"No, I just—" Her cheeks were flaming, but he couldn't see them. "I just happened to be up in your part of town—"

"Oh, I supposed you'd be down at the Peacock Feather."

"No, I didn't go there." She was on the verge of downright irrational anger.

"Where are you?"

"Over here at the corner of Broadway."

There was a silence. "Damn it, Fred, why don't you ask me to come up and see you?"

"Oh, I couldn't do that very well, Bee. You see—well, I've just got a little bedroom here, and—"

She stamped again. He was Victorian! The old convention was to her the downright vulgarest of all the hideously vulgar Puritan prohibitions.

He was speaking: "I'll come right down, Bee."

SHE waited on the corner. Tall and quick and strong he came, but with that grave face and those masked eyes.

"Had anything to eat, Bee? I'll take you in somewhere if—"

"I've had all I want."

He seemed to have nothing else to say. In a minute she'd be crying like a baby. It was awful. He didn't want her around. She was just a plain little fool. But they couldn't helplessly stand here on a Broadway corner. A force greater and blinder than anything she had experienced up to now was driving her on, mercilessly—a force greater than Greenwich Village logic, greater than any human thought. She saw a cruising red taxi and raised her hand. The cab wheeled around.

Fred cleared his throat. "I've simply got to tell you, Bee, that I can't afford this sort of thing any more."

"Well, I can afford this."

She saw him wince, and felt a sudden new warm softness of body and mind. She got in. He followed.

"Where to?" asked the driver.

Fred looked inquiringly at her; then, with a touch of his old authority, said crisply: "Up through the park."

There was an imp of mischief in Bee, that would pop up unexpectedly and at the most incongruous moments. "We'll dispense with the orchids this trip," she said.

William Mc Fee

Precisely as was anticipated, the stories that William Mc Fee has been writing for this magazine—his first short stories, by the way—have made a profound impression on readers and critics alike. So it is with especial pleasure that another is announced for publication in an early issue. Have an eye out for—

"THE SWORD OF
DR. DAMOCLES"

It cleared her head. She wouldn't cry now. She'd shaved safely past that rock. "I've been over to the library, Fred, looking up your story."

"Oh!" He was staring out ahead.

"I want to know the rest of it."

"What's the use? Just a dirty mess."

"What did they do to you?"

"Oh, they had me up. I did what every crook does, used influence. Some of the men in the Company put on a lot of pressure. That got me out of the manslaughter charge. I paid a fine for drunkenness and another for reckless driving. Then the banking crowd that's running Aéro Accessories suggested that a more conservative type of man might feel a little more at home in my job. That was that. Sold the wreck of my car to the garage man that hauled it away. Junk! The insurance company settled the claims against me. Easy come, easy go. I'd spent every cent of my salary. Just a fool. Then I found out that this booze thing had a real hold on me. Went on the wagon, but it's a fight. Bound to be a fight."

"What are you doing now, Fred?"

"Oh, trying to sell bonds. But there's a lot to live down. And I haven't my buoyancy. Begins to look as if it was all I've ever had. Just a swagger—undisciplined exuberance. It's gone now. Everybody knows, of course. That all-round catastrophe is the only recommendation I've got, that and my drinking. And—" He stared into her eyes; by the light that kept flitting into the moving taxi from the evenly spaced rows of park lights, she saw, as in the flicker of an old-fashioned motion-picture, his haggard face, the staring eyes; he appeared to be holding his breath. "I've killed—two—people!"

His head dropped into his hands. His shoulders moved convulsively. He was sobbing.

FOR a moment she herself could do no more than breathe. That softness had gone all through her body. Her breast seemed to swell. The park, New York, the whole confused world, floated out of her consciousness. She caught his head in her arms, drew it up to her face, kissed him again and again. His arms crushed her, but not enough. She wanted them to hurt her.

Then he drew off. "For God's sake, Bee! We can't lose our heads like this! We've got to be reasonable."

"Why?"

"Well—Look at us! Look at me!"

"But what has reason got to do with it?"

"Can't you get it into your head? I'm broke, in debt, sunk; it'll be years—"

"I can cook," said she.

"But I'm junk, Bee."

Her hands lay limply on her knees now. She was looking down at them. "What's the good of talking that way? Here we are!"

"But—"

"We may as well face it. I guess I knew this afternoon, only I couldn't think then. What we may think doesn't seem to have much to do with it. If you left me now, I'd want you. It would hurt. I'd ache for you. I want to feel your arms around me right now."

He caught her up. When she could speak, she said: "I'm not afraid of it. All I can make out of it is that I seem to belong to you."

"But you couldn't marry me, Bee! Junk!"

"That's for you to say, I guess. I can't make terms. But I can't let you go."

"Where's the career thing?"

"I don't seem to have got very far with it."

"But, damn it, child, I'm broke! Can't you—"

"Perhaps you need me all the more. Perhaps I can help you."

"Will you marry me?"

MISS ANNE MORGAN points the way to the business Women of America

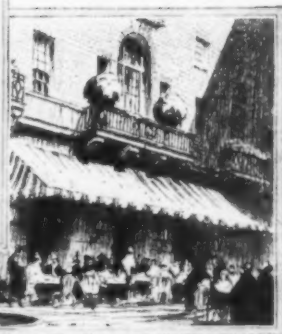
"AMONG the many women who are my friends a high standard of personality always demands physical as well as moral and mental development and care. These women desire always that their complexion should be clear and vigorous.

So many achieve this end by following the Pond's Method that I should like to see the dressing rooms of our new Club House of the American Woman's Association equipped with Pond's Two Creams."

Annie Morgan



This new photographic study of Miss Morgan in which her fine personality is faithfully portrayed, was made in Paris last summer by Baron de Meyer



ANNE MORGAN is unique among the women of America. Born to unlimited wealth and unequalled rank, possessing the organizing ability of her father, that great financial genius, J. Pierpont Morgan, she has dedicated her life to great achievements for humanity.

Miss Morgan's greatest interest is the welfare of other women. And because she believes that the business women of America are on the highroad to success she is investing her faith and energy in their behalf.

She knows that their lasting success will result from well-balanced living that has made no sacrifice of womanliness and charm. And she knows that they believe this, too. So in planning the equipment of their new Club House, she thinks even of the details that will accord with their personal tastes and contribute to their more attractive appearance. Knowing that so many achieve a clear and vigorous complexion by following the Pond's Method, Miss Morgan declares, "I should like to see the dressing rooms equipped with Pond's Two Creams."

The first step in the Pond's Method of caring for the skin is a deep thorough cleansing with Pond's Cold Cream. Every day, always after any exposure, and before retiring at night, smooth Pond's Cold Cream lavishly over your face, neck, arms and hands. Let its pure

oils bring to the surface the dust and powder and excess oil. Wipe off all the cream and dirt. Repeat the process and finish with a dash of cold water or a rub with ice. Now look at your skin—as fresh as a new-blown rose!

The second step is a soft finish and protection with Pond's Vanishing Cream. Fluff on just the least bit of Pond's Vanishing Cream. Now see how soft and even the surface of your skin is—how transparently lovely. Notice how well this cream takes your powder—holds it long and evenly—and how it protects you from wind, sun and dust!

Pond's Cold Cream comes in extra large jars now. And both creams in two smaller sizes of jars and in tubes. The Pond's Extract Company.



THE TWO CREAMS which Miss Morgan says she would like to see in the dressing rooms of the New Club House of the American Woman's Association.

MISS MORGAN'S DEEP INTEREST in the women of America is again expressed by her activities in behalf of the nineteen story club house to be erected on West 23rd Street, by the American Woman's Association of New York City. It will cost \$4,500,000.00 and will contain a thousand private rooms with bath, to rent at \$10.00 to \$16.00 per week. This intimate sketch of the garden terrace suggests the personality and charm with which its sponsors have endowed it.

Free Offer Mail this coupon and we will send you free tubes of these Two Creams and an attractive little folder telling you how to use them.

The Pond's Extract Company, Dept. B.
133 Hudson St., New York.

Please send me your free tubes, one each of Pond's Cold and Vanishing Creams, and directions for using them.

Name.....

Street.....

City.....State.....

"Yes."

"When?"

"Next Saturday." She never knew why she said that. The words uttered themselves.

IT wasn't until Bee was climbing the stairs to that room of Delia's that the world began creeping back about her. What about Hollywood? And how was she ever to explain herself to Louise? How, possibly?

Fortunately, Lou hadn't come in. She'd said something about dining with Leslie. Bee undressed quickly and made up the sofa. She was sleeping there during the emergency, as Delia had only a single bed in the room. Before turning in, she called up their own rooms, and heard from Arthur's own lips that Delia was definitely better, though still suffering frightfully. So he was sticking. Well, he'd better. If he should exhibit the first sign of slipping back into the old selfishness, a word to Fred would be enough. Curious how effectively a little primitive, crisp vigor could straighten out a mess like that. "Force never settled anything?" Maybe. Maybe—

She put out the light and lay on the lumpy sofa in a glow. Why had she said next Saturday, anyway? Why not sooner? Every moment away from Fred now would be torture. And the nights would be long. . . . She got up again to call him. Just to hear his voice and to float an idiotic kiss to him over the wire. And she said: "Don't buy a stone, Fred—just the wedding ring. Yes, of course I want that. . . . What, you'll wear one too? Oh, wonderful!" She'd have to say something to Lou. Something.

But when Lou finally came in, more preoccupied than ever, she found herself simply avoiding the issue. A cheerful little coward. Too much to unsay. She'd have to think it out. Let it ride—a day, or two, or three.

They talked, jerkily again, touching only surfaces, while Louise was undressing. When the light was out again and Lou's long body stretched out (with a sigh) in the bed, Bee said: "Do you suppose there's a chance that those two will work out some happiness together?"

"No, I don't," replied Lou. "Not a chance. You can't really make Arthur over. Sooner or later she'll have to divorce him. Probably sooner. He's had a scare. It's sobered him for the moment. But his habits are fixed. He's really just an epicurean experimentalist among women."

"Not a bad line, old thing."

"But marriage was what she needed. She's got it. He'll have to do something in the way of keeping her alive. She can make him do that. And she'll have her morale again. That's about all I can see in it."

"Probably that's about the size of it," mused Bee. Apropos of nothing at all, she suddenly wanted to laugh and sing. In-

congruous again. She made herself lie very still and breathe deeply. Lou would be asleep pretty soon. Then she could float out into delicious reverie, half awake, putting together again in her warm imagination each of the series of incidents that had taken place during that amazing taxi ride.

"Oh, Lou—awake?"

"Sort of."

"Did you talk with Kapek?"

"Yes."

"Well—what did he say?"

"Nothing doing."

"Oh, Lou!"

"Amounted to that. Mr. Des Plaines could hardly wait on me for his next picture, but I must feel assured that there'll always be a place for a person of my talent in the picture industry."

"That's something."

"My dear, the difference between a general feeling of assurance and that definite contract is exactly five hundred a week. Now keep still and let me get to sleep."

Chapter Twenty-one

FOR Louise, too, it had been a deeply emotional evening. Slowly, a quarter-hour after Bee went uptown, she walked over to the Square. Leslie had said he'd be waiting in front of the theater. Over the telephone she hadn't been able to make him out. He'd been abrupt and sparing of words (unlike him) and rather breathlessly mysterious. Something had happened—perhaps real trouble. He was out of work of course, and facing the long drought that summer presents to most theater folk. There would be some deep appeal to her sympathy. No escaping that. And she might weaken. She might. Her recent discovery that you couldn't long ride the complications of life with a high hand was bringing a sense of being beaten down that bewildered her. It hurt. And the deeper knowledge that love, when judgment is outraged, may linger as a habit, hurt her more sharply still. Undertow.

Nearing the corner, her feet lagged. She stopped, by a doorstep—simply stood there. But her thoughts weren't getting her anywhere. She'd be growing bitter in a moment, just vaguely, unreasonably bitter. There was nothing in that. She might better drift with these queer conflicting currents. After all, that was what most humans did, when you stopped to think of it. Planning was no good. How could she figure out what she might do? How could anybody? With a shrug she went on around the corner and gave Leslie her hand.

He had on his blue suit, neatly pressed, and a simple four-in-hand tie with the pearl stick-pin that she had given him only last Christmas. And she'd gone with him like a settled housewife in early March to pick out that suit. It had to be ready-made. Real tailors were luxuries. But Leslie's figure, though tall, was of good average proportions, and the ready-made things always fitted him.

That moment, standing there before the Village Theater, looking straight at the man who had for so long been her accepted lover, was the most poignant of her life thus far. He still loved her. She sensed that in every nerve. And that pull of sheer habit was unnerving. Perhaps, in this queer moment, her life was shaping its course for good. The only strength that appeared to be in her was that rising bitterness. That thought was something, perhaps, to hold to. For she couldn't drift back into what is called love with bitterness in her heart. It would give the lie to her whole life. Or could she? Quietly she stood, saying no unnecessary word.

"I simply had to see you tonight, Lou." Though he was as quiet as she, her heart felt that breathlessness in him, and she won-

dered. "I'm going to buy us a real dinner. What do you say to the Ritz?"

"Oh, no, Leslie." This was a puzzle.

"Oh, yes!" He chuckled, and waved at a taxi that stood on the farther side of the Square.

"Let's ride up in the subway, Leslie."

"Not a chance!" To the driver he said, speaking (she saw now) out of a muffled exuberance: "Drive up through Times Square and turn on Forty-eighth Street to the Ritz."

AGAIN, as they rolled up Seventh Avenue, he chuckled. She said nothing, merely leaning back in the corner and watching the short blocks flit by. Once, when he took her hand, she drew it gently away. Whatever might be his tremendous secret, he was keeping it with remarkable firmness. It wasn't like him. His was an open, sunny nature. Always before, he had spilled out his thoughts like a child. Indeed, it was that childlike quality that had captivated her heart, more than two years back. She reflected now, sadly, that she could never again experience that glow of happiness. Whatever might come to her,—and life, after all, simply came at you,—she couldn't hope to recapture that.

The taxi turned in the traffic lanes through Times Square, and then into Forty-eighth Street. Leslie was looking eagerly out ahead. Her curiosity mounted into pique. Suddenly he leaned forward and ordered the chauffeur to drive in to the curb. Then he looked at her. His eyes were shining. She simply waited.

"Look over there," he said,—"that theater." He was fumbling in a breast pocket, among some papers there. He drew out a long envelope. "See that frame for the big sign? Electric lights?"

She saw it.

"In just three weeks, dear, my name's going up there." He was excitedly opening the envelope. "Yes, ma'am! Going right up there in the electric lights. The biggest piece of luck you ever heard of. 'Sunshine Sue,' Abrahams' new musical comedy, 'Sunshine Sue,' with Adele Astor and Leslie Perkins. Here's the contract. Somebody that heard me in 'The Gondoliers' told Abrahams about me. I sang for him Wednesday. He's crazy about me. Says he'll put me over with a bang. Of course he thinks I've had more experience than I have. But that's all right. I've got it in writing." And he shouted: "Drive on to the Ritz."

With a queerly grim sensation Louise, very tall and slim and graceful, a handsome girl, walked into the great Paris-like dining-room, beside the big blonde Leslie. The maitre d'hôtel hovered over them. And then they were alone.

Leslie leaned over the table on his elbows. "Well, Lou," he said, huskily, "how about it? What do you say now? I've landed at last. The struggle's over. I'm to have three hundred a week. Equity contract. What do you say to that? What's in our way now?"

She couldn't say anything. Her mind, awaking at last, was working swiftly and clearly. She saw him stepping out into success. They'd surely like him. He was handsome and pleasant. He sang really well. There was no reason why he shouldn't become a *matinée* idol within a few months—even weeks. All that, she well knew, granted the personality, was so much a matter of clever exploiting. And Abrahams seldom, very seldom, went wrong. He'd be surrounded by pretty girls. And Leslie's was an easy, susceptible nature. He was no stranger to self-pity, but his was hardly a heart to be broken.

The announcement—oh, it grew clearer every moment—came to her as a release. She had dreaded finding him in trouble, but this—

"He doesn't need me," ran her thoughts. "He doesn't need me."

"Rivals"

Under that old yet ever pertinent title Stephen French Whitman has written the story of the most amazing man in modern fiction—and a woman no less unusual. The time of the tale is today, but its flavor is of the Middle Ages, and the scene that magic city of art—Florence. It will be published in an early number!

Would you walk across the room to save 3¢?



Smell the naptha
in Fels-Naptha!

Many Women

get the extra help of Fels-Naptha in this easy, simple way:

They chip Fels-Naptha directly into the washing machine, or dissolve it in hot water, as they prefer. Chipping is so easy! Lots of women use just an ordinary kitchen knife. It only takes about 50 seconds. No fuss. No bother. No waste. It dissolves quickly, and works up into a rich, creamy suds, ready to start its cleansing work.

And for the little effort of chipping, you are more than repaid with the extra help of dirt-loosening naptha and splendid soap combined.

Try Fels-Naptha next time you use your washing machine. You will be surprised and more than pleased!

Of course you would! Any thrifty housewife would consider it a worth while saving.

With no more effort—and with scarcely any more time, you can easily chip a golden bar of Fels-Naptha into your washing machine.

By doing this you not only save money, but you get the benefit of naptha—that safe, gentle dirt-loosener and splendid soap combined. That's why you get **extra washing help** in Fels-Naptha you cannot get with soap alone, no matter what its shape or form—color or price.

Fels-Naptha loosens dirt more quickly, more easily. It saves wear-and-tear in washing. It saves time and work.

With naptha and splendid soap working hand-in-hand, helping each other; with the perfect teamwork between Fels-Naptha and the washing machine; with the saving of soap-money and clothes-money—isn't it worth the few seconds it takes to chip Fels-Naptha into your washing machine?

Your washline tells the story of this extra help. Clothes of snowy whiteness—of spring-like freshness—of a sweet, thorough, wholesome cleanliness that you actually can see and feel.

No wonder so many thousands of women—after trying this and that form of soap in their washing machines, say—"Nothing can take the place of Fels-Naptha!"

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THE GOLDEN BAR WITH THE CLEAN NAPHTHA ODOR



They stop digestive distress—but not the digestive process!

DIGESTIVE distress is most often the result of excessive acidity of the stomach. And to relieve heartburn, flatulence and gas it is necessary to overcome this excessive acidity.

Alkalines such as bicarbonate of soda will combat acidity—yes. But all too often, they retard digestion. For, unless you take exactly the right amount, they leave the stomach with an alkaline residue.

But your stomach must be slightly acid to digest your food.

Gastrogen Tablets are free from this objection

The minute you swallow one or two Gastrogen Tablets they go to work to neutralize the abnormal acidity. But that done, they stop. You can eat a pound of them—they can't make your stomach alkaline. The surplus passes out of your system without change. It is then a simple matter for nature to restore the slight balance of acidity so necessary for good digestion.

Gastrogen Tablets are mild, safe, effective and convenient. They are pleasant-tasting. And for sweetening the breath they can hardly be excelled.

Your druggist has them in handy pocket tins of 15 tablets for 20c, also in cabinet-size bottles of 60 tablets for 60c. If you wish to try them before you buy them, send the coupon for free introductory packet of 6 tablets.

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BRISTOL-MYERS CO., Dept. B-26
42 Rector Street, New York City

Without charge or obligation on my part,
send me your special introductory packet of 6
Gastrogen Tablets.

Name _____

Address _____

"Lou, I can't tell you. It means just everything in the world. You've done so much for me." His eyes glistened. He was a nice boy. "You've done everything, been everything. But now at last I can do something for you. There's no reason left for refusing to marry me. Oh, you've just got to. I've got to have you with me in all this."

Still she sat thinking, very quiet. Yes, it was clear. It was her release. She took everything into account, saw all around and far beyond this moment, read his life if not her own. He'd soon be insisting that she give up her job. He'd want her to be the sort of homekeeping body to whom the roving actor would now and then return. He'd be jealous, and in time exacting. And so naively disorganized a nature as his would change swiftly under the pressure of success. Finally she laid a hand on his clasped hand. She could touch his hands now.

"No, Leslie," she said gently. "I'm sorry. I loved you, and I shall always be fond of you. I know now that there can never be another man in my life as you have been,—not in the same way, not with that thrill. Whatever may happen to either of us, I know that. But it's over. And after tonight I'm not going to meet you again."

It ran on, of course, into something of a scene. Louise didn't waver again. But it was a profoundly lonely girl who came up the stairs that night and into the dark room where Bee lay in a drowse on the sofa. She'd hoped Bee would be asleep, had thought of undressing very quietly in the dark and slipping into bed. Somehow she got through those scattering bits of talk. And when Bee drifted off into slumber, which didn't take long, she lay awake, painfully awake, staring up into the dark.

Chapter Twenty-two

ON Sunday they returned to their rooms. Arthur rented an ambulance and took Delia back to hers, as he had sublet his apartment. It was settled that very soon—as soon, indeed, as she could sit up and hold a pen—Delia was to write her parents of the marriage that had been hastened by a sudden illness. It was working out.

Bee was out Sunday afternoon and evening. She didn't explain. Louise dined alone at the Peacock Feather. From then on until Wednesday they met for conversation only at breakfast. And then their talk clung desperately to surfaces. It was during the Wednesday breakfast that Lou broached the subject of the lease. "Mrs. Nellstrom spoke about it last night, Bee. We've only three weeks more. She says she'll have to know right away if we want to renew."

But all Bee replied to that was: "Oh yes, of course. I'd forgotten. We'd better talk it over tonight."

"Will you be around?"

It was a casually voiced question, but Bee lowered her eyes and considered it. There was a new sober fullness about her pretty mouth. "Yes," she finally said. "I'll be at the Feather about six."

And there Louise found her, chatting with friends. Tacitly, indeed with more than a hint of grim purpose on Lou's part, they found their old table in the corner.

"Well," began Lou, and then paused, as if she found the going somewhat difficult. "I've only got a few minutes, Bee. As a matter of fact, I'm eating uptown at seven. There's a situation that has arisen rather unexpectedly. But I've been thinking it over, and I rather imagine we'd better give up the lease."

"No news from the movies?"

Louise moved her head in the negative. "Nothing there at all. Oh, I suppose if I were to go after it hard enough, pull wires here and there, wait around, I could land something. But I don't believe I want to.

There's a future at the store—and of course the chance of some day branching out on my own. It's what I've been building, and Mr. Hargrove has just about convinced me that I'd better stick to it, keep right in step with it instead of adventuring around. The fact is, dear, it's turning out to be rather a dramatic period in my life. I've got to run off for a few days, anyway. Come to think of it, there's no more than time for me to stop in at the rooms and throw some things into a bag. But—well, here, what would you think if I should swing off on my own?"

Their eyes met for the first time.

"You're going away tonight, Lou?"

"Yes—for a few days or a week."

It seemed odd to Louise that Bee didn't ask questions. Instead, she merely looked, with wide eyes that had a curious shine in them.

"Then I'd better tell you now, Lou," she said.

"Tell me what?"

"Well—maybe I'll just hang on to the rooms myself."

"I'd think that over pretty carefully." This was the practical Louise. "Of course, as New York apartments run, the place is cheap, but—"

"I'm marrying Fred on Saturday."

"I married Wilbur this noon," said Louise.

THEY simply looked. Bee broke the silence with an embarrassed little laugh. "The funny thing is, I'm terribly happy, Lou. Fred has changed. He's been up against it, and he's human. We've got a fight on our hands,"—her firm little jaw was set with eager determination,—"but we're going through with it. We're going to build. But I'll admit I feel as if I'd swallowed every word I've ever uttered."

"Words don't seem to have much to do with it."

"No, they don't. Though I'll admit that certain words of mine have seemed lately to mean a good deal. They hit me in the face, Lou. Especially at night! I said some things to Delia—oh, just the sort of talking we do here in the Village—and I know now I hurried her into that mess. It isn't pleasant to face. I suppose that's why I—"

"Nothing you said made much of any difference there, Bee."

"I wish I could believe that. The worst of it is, I have the uncomfortable feeling that I wasn't real. It was just things I'd heard and read. Parrot stuff. Reality does sober you. However—oh, well! The queer thing is, I've changed."

"Of course. So have I."

"Do you suppose that's what life is? Just one phase after another? Different phases."

"Probably. Or maybe we're growing up."

"I wonder."

"So far as I'm concerned,"—Louise was in a curiously somber mood for a bride,—"well, I'm pretty sick of words and theories. All this chatter. Facts seem to be all that count. They're pretty solid things, facts."

Bee's quick thoughts took a new direction.

"Yes. How about Wilbur's mother, Lou?"

"Well, somebody's got to look out for her. God knows Wilbur can't."

"And you'd do it, you'd just do it, you dear old thing!" Impulsively, warmly, Bee reached both hands across the table.

"Well, anyhow, we're off on the next phase, Bee. I rather imagine that's about all there is to it. I must be getting along. We're going out to a little place at the other end of Long Island. There's swimming and sailing. I—I rather hate leaving you in this abrupt way—"

"Oh, that's all right." Bee glanced at her wrist, then controlled an eager little laugh. "Fred'll be here in a few minutes."

THE END.



"I was continually depressed, morbid, lost weight, suffered from insomnia and constipation—in fact was desperate. To augment my misery, my body became covered with eruptions. Medicines drained my system—but to no avail. A friend recommended Yeast. I was skeptical. But I persisted. Then, wonder of wonders, my eruptions disappeared, my appetite increased—I became myself again. Two cakes of Fleischmann's Yeast a day—dissolved in 'malted milk'—had performed the miracle."

ALEXANDER H. SCHULLMAN,
Pittsburgh, Pa.



"During the spring of 1924 I suffered through loss of sleep, nervousness—general run-down condition; for six continuous weeks I endured boil after boil on neck and back. Kind people recommended Yeast, but it took a well-known physician to convince me that 'there must be something to it.' Before I had finished one week's treatment of two yeast cakes a day, I felt a change in my system. Every boil disappeared, my skin cleared, my strength increased. I feel different and look it."

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found again the energy of
youth . . . with one Fresh Food*

NOT a "cure-all," not a medicine in any sense—Fleischmann's Yeast is simply a remarkable fresh food.

The millions of tiny active yeast plants in every cake invigorate the whole system. They aid digestion—clear the skin—banish the poisons of constipation. Where cathartics give only temporary relief, yeast strengthens the intestinal muscles and makes them healthy and active. And day by day it releases new stores of energy.

Eat two or three cakes regularly every day before meals: on crackers—in fruit juices or milk—or just plain. For constipation especially, dissolve one cake in hot water (not scalding) before breakfast and at bedtime. Buy several cakes at a time—they will keep fresh in a cool dry place for two or three days. All grocers have Fleischmann's Yeast. Start eating it today!

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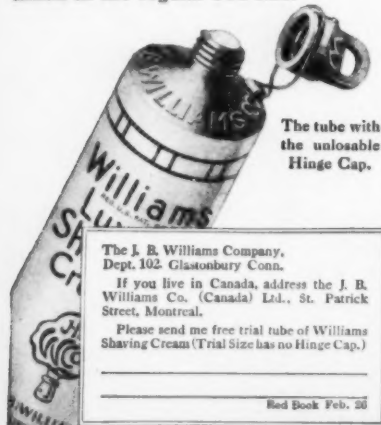
—Williams piles up full, sturdy lather quickly. Furthermore, Williams lather *stays* piled up.

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Red Book Feb. 26

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THE STAINS ON THE MANTEL

(Continued from page 60)

and gone, Drake said: "Well, Sorby, have you got those safe-blowers on Riverside?"

"I have not. But I hope that old man up there, old Capron, has learned his lesson. Fancy keeping a fortune in bonds in a wall-safe in your bedroom! What are bank vaults for, I'd like to know?"

"Just tell my friend Howard about it."

"Oh, a neat little job it was—with gelignite. A corner house; the next house was boarded up for the summer. There was a gunboat on the river, and two or three people who say they heard an explosion didn't seem to remember that gunboats don't practice at midnight. The old man and his secretary—Bennett his name is—were down at Great Neck, Long Island, with the car and the chauffeur. They got home at one in the morning, found the safe open, the bonds gone, and the butler, cook, and two maids drugged and sprawling all over the servants' dining-room."

I REMEMBERED that line in the cryptograph letter: "Cook's all right." "Does the secretary sleep in the house?" I inquired. Of course I was thinking of Gramercy Park.

"No. He lives in a boarding-house in West Eighty-fourth Street. But he slept in the Riverside house that night—didn't sleep I should say, for the old man wouldn't let him go home—kept him awake all night with his lamentations. Bennett has been his secretary for five years, and the old man leans on him. A long, thin, hatchet-faced fellow of forty, the secretary is. Wears gold-rimmed spectacles. It was only when I had failed in every other direction that I turned my attention to him, as an accomplice. But it won't go. I can't even find any women in his life. And his record in every other way is clean as my maiden aunt's. He's rather like a maiden aunt himself—keeps a cat in his boarding-house, his landlady told me."

Drake nodded. The portrait of the secretary was well-drawn.

I really could not see him as an admirer of blonde ladies.

"I'm afraid, old man," said Drake, with his inimitable drawl, "that you'll soon be in need of amateur assistance."

Sorby drew an explosive breath—his chin went down in his collar.

"A clue—that's what I want—a clue!"

He picked up his fork and jabbed it into his beefsteak as if it had been that flawless Great Neck alibi of the only man so far in sight.

Good old Sorby!

"The best of us," my friend said, "can do nothing without clues."

Sorby grunted: "I wish *you* had this damned case!"

Drake threw me a glance which forbade me to flutter an eyelash.

The Inspector left us at the door of the restaurant. I had not expected that Drake would take me home with him after luncheon, but he did.

"Just to show you one of my professional transformations," he smiled. "They are rather neat—my transformations."

I asked him if he was going to have that blood analyzed.

"Blood? But when I sampled those stains on the mantel, I had not yet found something better."

As soon as we reached the detective's apartment, he left me alone in the sitting-room for half an hour. It was a charming room, filled with curios he had brought together from all parts of the world. I was standing by the window, examining one of his treasures, when I heard his voice calling me:

"Howard! Come down to the study."

As I reentered that little room, the pink

rose and the revolver were still on the desk; but behind the desk—what was the man who stood there, in that baggy unpressed gray suit? Two or three inches shorter he seemed, and fifty pounds heavier. And the face! Not one feature except the nose could have been identified as Dexter Drake's. Even the eyes were changed by spectacles and by the drooping of the lids in a simulated dullness. Pulled down, the face was, no doubt by strips of adhesive plaster under the square beard and mustache of grizzled brown. And that perfectly natural-looking grizzled hair—it might be a man of fifty-five, seventeen years older than Drake. The hands, too. The way they were held—half-closed and slack—made them look like old hands.

On the floor beside him stood a worn straw suitcase, and on it lay a black straw hat.

He took from his pocket a briar pipe and a bag of tobacco, filled the pipe, lighted it, sat down with his clumsy shoes wide apart, and began to smoke—stolidly. Between two puffs he said, in a thick voice I could not have recognized: "Look behind you."

I turned—of course it was Patchen. His only disguise was a beard of faded yellow and gray which "went" with his old blue eyes. He had a worn traveling-bag in his hand.

The detective then reached for that big revolver on the desk, and put it well down into his hip pocket.

"If you're passing this way in the morning, Howard, run in—say around nine o'clock. If I'm not here—oh, don't be anxious about me! I have to get access to something without arousing suspicion. It might take me two or three days, but I hope not."

He knocked out his pipe, got clumsily to his feet, put the black straw hat on his head, and picked up the suitcase.

I walked with them to the corner of Third Avenue, where they got a downtown surface car. I felt blue—being left behind, while Drake took an old man like Patchen on business which might be "dangerous." Had he forgotten my football record? I wasn't precisely a maiden aunt, like that secretary of Capron's who kept a cat in his boarding-house.

All that evening I wondered where Drake could be, and what he was doing. What a thrilling life he led—a shifting kaleidoscope of adventure after adventure!

AT nine o'clock the next morning I called at Drake's place. He was at home, already, and so his expedition must have been successful.

When I entered the study, he was sitting on the window-seat, polishing his nails.

"And clothed once more in your own garments," I observed.

"Yes, Howard. Sit down. I've had an exciting night—we reached home this morning at four. I got what I wanted. Oh, the case isn't finished yet—it's only begun; but I have something to show you."

He crossed the room to his small black safe in the corner, dropped on one knee and began to play with the combination. The safe door swung open; he thrust in his hand—the next moment he was standing before my chair, holding out to me a large packet of crisp papers.

"Bonds!" he laughed. "The bonds which were stolen from old Capron's safe, on Riverside Drive, the night of June 19th."

"Why, Dexter Drake!" I was never so astonished in my life.

His black eyes were twinkling. "What will Sorby say when I tell him? But I've only got half the lost bonds there. The

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music. And now the radio tells us what to do and how to do it.

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HALEY FISKE, President.

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other half can be recovered by the police—when I've told them where to look."

He put the bonds back in the safe, and closed the door on them.

"Will you meet me at Needham's place in Gramercy Park, at two o'clock precisely?" he asked.

"Without fail. But *where* did you get those bonds?"

"I wish I had time to tell you," he smiled. "But I have to see several people this morning, including Mr. Capron on Riverside. My first appointment is with a lady—at the Hotel Majestic."

The Hotel Majestic! Not about a lost key—not this time. A vibrant tone in Dexter's voice promised me further drama.

"Gramercy Park," he explained, "is an unsuspicious background for a very difficult scene which I have to direct—a crucial scene."

NEED I insist that I was not late for that two o'clock scene? As I went up in the elevator, that green-liveried, very black old negro down there rolled the whites of his eyes at me.

"Ah sho thin's Mistuh Needham's havin' a pahty," he said.

So I was not the first to arrive!

As Needham opened his door, I saw Inspector Sorby and another man, a stranger, standing near the window. They seemed to be watching the street through the screen of a heavy lace curtain.

The folding doors of the bedroom were closed now.

The room smelt faintly of turpentine. Needham had repainted the carved pineapple.

But though he was still in ignorance of the wider implications of his mantel mystery, his manner was awesomely serious. Small as he was, he seemed weighty with his consciousness of being the center of some tremendous issue.

"Mr. Drake was here this morning," he whispered. "He borrowed my latchkey, and my name. He asked me to warn you not to call him Drake, when he comes in. Do you know the police inspector?"

"Oh, yes!" I went over to the window and held out my hand to Sorby, who greeted me pleasantly. But he did not introduce his companion, a medium-sized, gray-haired, very pallid man in black clothes whose large hands trembled with nervousness. The atmosphere was tense with expectation. The two men kept their eyes on the street in front of the house.

A large limousine drew up to the curb and stopped. Sorby's companion was peering through the curtain; he was breathing quickly.

Dexter Drake got out of the car; then another man got out—a tall, thin man, very well-dressed. He wore gold-rimmed spectacles.

"Do you recognize him?" Sorby asked the pallid man excitedly.

"Yes, yes! That's the man who came to my house to see Smalley. He came several times. I don't know his name, but it must have been he who telephoned, June 20th. He seemed terribly agitated when I told him that Smalley had gone away, bag and baggage, that morning, leaving no address. He just couldn't believe it, somehow."

I remembered Drake's saying yesterday: "If Smalley is known there—"

The Inspector turned, caught the other man by the sleeve.

"Quick, now! They'll be here in a moment. We mustn't be seen."

Sorby laid a green card on the table. "Don't touch it," he said to me. "It's my signal for Drake."

With a bound he was at those folding doors. Into the bedroom he went, with Needham and the other man; then he carefully re-closed the doors—leaving a narrow

crack just wide enough to hear through.

I was left alone. Whatever the rôle Drake meant me to play—oh, I hadn't a clue to it! But the door was already opening. The detective came in, followed by the tall man in gold spectacles.

"Hello, Howard! Glad to see you." Drake's tone was perfectly casual. "Mr. Bennett, this is my friend Paul Howard."

Old Capron's hatchet-faced secretary! So he was one piece of the puzzle. He greeted me formally, his manner quite unconcerned.

He sat down in the chair Drake indicated, and I also sat down.

"Mr. Bennett came with me in Mr. Capron's car," Drake explained, "to take back to Mr. Capron an important paper I promised him."

He went over to Needham's little desk in the corner—seemed to be hunting for something.

"Ah," he cried, "here it is!"

He drew up a chair, so the three of us sat in a triangle. Then he unfolded a long sheet of paper—held it out.

It was a copy, on a large scale, of that cryptograph letter which he had found yesterday under the bloodstained pineapple.

The man took it—stared at it. His face went suddenly gray. It was so unexpected! He gave Drake one sharp glance—then his eyes wavered, dropped to the paper. I was sure he could read it—some of it, anyhow, without a closer study. But Drake's nonchalance gave no hint that he also knew its meaning.

"Mr. Capron told me," he said politely, "that you were sailing alone for Europe tomorrow, on your vacation. Do you know Europe well?"

"Er—fairly well." The man was pulling himself together. "I have been abroad twice with Mr. Capron." But his voice shook. The Adam's-apple in his long neck was jumping around.

Then he got to his feet—turned toward the door.

Drake never moved. "Sit down again," he said quietly. "Really, you'd better. There are two policemen out in the hall."

BENNETT sat down again—just dropped into the chair, as if his legs gave way. "Who are you? Mr. Capron said—"

"Yes, I arranged with your employer this little errand for you down here. The letter which your confederate Smalley, the actual safe-blower, mailed to you on the morning of June 20th, fell into my hands—no matter how. I could read it. Smalley hid your share of the bonds in a perfectly safe place. I got them last night. Smalley must have lost his nerve—suddenly; and of course he wouldn't dare telephone you at the Riverside house, where you spent that night. He wrote you, instead. I've just given you a copy of his letter. Then, having a passport, he sailed at noon that day, June 20th, on the French Line, as our police have just ascertained. Your own alibi was perfect. If I had not found the Capron bonds in the *very place* Smalley indicated in his letter to you, and if some one had not identified you from that window just now as a friend of Smalley's,—the signal to me as I came into this room was that green card there on the table,—I really don't know how we could have got you, Mr. Bennett."

There was no taunt in Drake's tone, no triumph. He was merely stating his case.

"I have just cabled Smalley," he continued, "at the address he gave you in that letter: 'Delayed, but everything all right now. Will meet you at time and place indicated.' No signature. But our police have cabled the French police, and one of our best men sailed at noon today for Paris. It is easy, you know, to locate foreigners in France. We shall get Smalley and the other half of the bonds; he will



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not have dared to market them so soon. You must have thought he had double-crossed you—not hearing from him."

"I want a lawyer," the man gasped. "Of course. Please note that I have been telling you facts, not questioning you."

The scene went so swiftly that I had not had time to wonder how a communication from the safe-blower to the secretary got itself hidden in a mantelpiece five miles from the Riverside house.

Drake glanced round at the folding doors. "Sorby," he called.

The Inspector came in, with a young policeman in uniform.

Then I witnessed the formalities of an arrest, saw the handcuffs put on. There was no resistance. I think the man was too intelligent to make any.

"Well, Mr. Drake," the Inspector said, "you've got one of them for us, all right."

For some reason or other, it was just at that moment I began to get really excited. Was there going to be another arrest here? Because—Smalley the safe-blower was three thousand miles away when Needham had found that wet blood on his mantel!

WHEN the hall door had closed behind Sorby and his prisoner, Needham came back to us from the bedroom, followed by the pallid man who had identified Bennett. Drake shook hands with the man, thanked him. Then the man went away. "Who is that fellow?" Needham asked.

"Why, that is Blackman, the ex-convict. I thought you knew."

Then I remembered. Drake had mentioned yesterday morning a reformed convict who was keeping a rooming-house for men. What was it Blackman had told a policeman about the peaceful life?

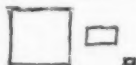
"We arranged the preliminary identification through the window," Drake said, "because Blackman told Sorby he just couldn't face a man whom his evidence was going to send up the river. Poor devil! He'll have to face Bennett, though, at the trial. The secretary must have let the safe-blower into the Riverside house, before he started for Great Neck with the old man. Drugged the servants' food, also. But I think those two men are new hands at the criminal game. There isn't a thing against Smalley at Police Headquarters—that's one of the two inquiries I made yesterday, Howard, when we were down there. And no experienced criminal would have sent such a communication as this through the mails." He took the original letter from his pocket. "Naive, isn't it? But there's always a screw loose somewhere in every criminal's head."

Needham was walking restlessly up and down the room. Of course he was wondering where his affair came in. But he suddenly seemed to remember his manners, and asked us to sit down.

"Drake," I said, "I've had proof before of your acumen; but how did you ever read all these amazing things out of that cipher letter?"

"Cipher letter?" Needham echoed. Absorbed in his mantel mystery, he had only that moment noticed the paper in Drake's hand. You know the detective had not dared to tell him about it yesterday.

"Yes," said Drake. "This is it."



1/2 3 Southern Negroes.

Cook's "all right."

423222711



"Why, both you and Mr. Needham could almost read it yourselves—now. You remember, Howard, how the two lines of

thought first joined themselves in my mind—the 19th of June bond-robbery and the stains on the mantel—when I saw the penciled postmark memorandum at the head of this half-sheet of notepaper. But it was only after our visit to the Hotel Majestic that I was sure I had a secret communication from that safe-blower to his confederate."

Needham started. "Hotel Majestic! Why—"

"Now take that first line—the square, the oblong, the little oblong. Vague, without the context. Second line, '1/2 3 Southern Negroes.' An absurd problem in division, eh? So I tried inserting commas: '1/2 (of something), 3, Southern, Negroes.' Well—'3, Southern,' might be 'third-floor south.' That made the square a square room, the oblong a bed, the little oblong something in the right-hand corner. 'Negros.' Bad spelling, till I inserted an apostrophe. Then I had, '1/2 of something, oblong, in that corner of the third-floor south square room at the Negro's.' Now, most criminals have nicknames. I remembered an ex-criminal named Blackman—black man—'Negro.' Was Blackman up to his old tricks again? He had a house, anyhow. So I took Patchen and went down there, disguised, because Blackman had seen me with Sorby. His third-floor south square room was vacant. I engaged it. There was a nailed-down carpet all over the floor; but at two o'clock in the morning, when Patchen and I took up the carpet in the corner indicated, we found that a board had been loosened. Under that board we found a thick oblong packet of bonds. I had proved the connection between Riverside Drive and Gramercy Park."

"B—but I don't understand." Needham was squinting his eyes.

"You will understand presently. Take the third line, 'Cook's all right.' Cook's is known all over the world as the international traveling agents and bankers. 'Cable me 'All right' at Cook's when you have got the bonds.' But Cook's in what city?"

Drake then pointed to the next line, the figures 423222711.

"I tried it first from left to right—but made no sense of it. So I tried reading it backwards. I told you the author of this letter was naive. Those two men must have practiced secret writing, preparing for future crimes. This isn't a real cipher, you know; it's a kind of puzzle. Reading backwards then, I tried commas again, and got something clear as daylight—11.7.22.23.24. Eleven o'clock, seventh month, July 22nd, 23rd, 24th. Eleven o'clock, therefore, night and morning on those days, till Bennett appeared. Oh, you can't make it anything else, for an appointment this summer, as it's already the second week in July, the seventh month. But where were they to meet?"

"So I turned to the symbols at the end, the arc of a circle, the star under it. Eureka! Under the Arc, the Star! What could that be but the Arc de Triomphe, the Étoile? Every, high-school boy and girl knows that Étoile means Star, and who hasn't heard of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris? But it was the signature, the small e, which gave me the name of the safe-blower. No doubt Smalley has used that signature since he was a boy, and told his friend about it—'small e,' 'Smalley.' But I had to verify it. So when I went disguised to Blackman's, I told him that Smalley had recommended his house. He asked if I knew where Smalley was. He had left suddenly one morning, the morning of June 20th."

"But, Drake," I said, "how were you sure even then that Smalley's confederate was old Capron's secretary?"

"I wasn't—until I saw that green card

How do your
last two years
compare with
his?



Mr. T. F. PEIRCE, President
of the Pacific Desk Company

THERE are two kinds of managers (just as there are two kinds of superintendents, engineers, salesmen and accountants).

One says: "I am so busy that I cannot possibly do any outside reading." He does none.

The other says: "I am so busy that I do not see how I can possibly find time for outside reading, *but I must.*" He does.

T. F. Peirce, manager of the Pacific Desk Company, was very busy.

But there is a difference between having a *busy mind* and having a *closed mind*. Mr. Peirce investigated the Alexander Hamilton Institute as a kind of test—to see just wherein his own training fell short. "I very quickly discovered one thing," he wrote frankly, "and that was how little I actually knew about the science of business."

Within a few weeks Mr. Peirce had found information in the Institute Course which had an immediate cash value to him.

The next step follows naturally and inevitably.

On October 31, 1922, Mr. Peirce wrote: "I want you to be the first to know the good news, and that is that I have been elected to the presidency of the Pacific Desk Company and have taken over the entire control of its stock. . . . I believe your Course has had much to do with making me ready to grasp this wonderful opportunity."

Perhaps you have your eye set on the high places of business, but they seem a long way off. The Alexander Hamilton Institute can shorten the distance between the place where you are and the place where you want to be. It has proved that in the careers of many thousands of men. Will you take their word for it that "Forging Ahead in Business" is a guide book worth reading? The coupon will bring it.

A wonderful two years' trip at full pay—

but only men with imagination can take it

ABOUT one man in ten will be appealed to by this page. The other nine will be hard workers, earnest, ambitious in their way, but to them a coupon is a coupon; a book is a book; a course is a course. The one man in ten has imagination.

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contact with the biggest minds in business without growing?

Is it worth a few pennies a day to have such an experience? Do you wonder that the men who have had it are holding positions of executive responsibility in business everywhere?

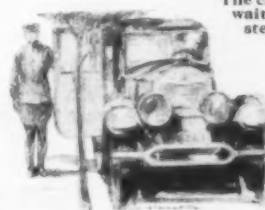
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The real Course is the experience of the most successful business men in the country. For two years you live with them. In two years you gain what they have had to

work out for themselves thru a lifetime of practical effort.

If you are the one man in ten to whom this page is directed, there is a book which you will be glad to own. It is called "Forging Ahead in Business." It costs you nothing, yet it is permanently valuable.

If you have read this far, and if you are at least 21 years of age, you are one of the men who ought to clip the coupon and receive this book with our compliments.



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on the table just now. If Blackman had not identified Bennett as Smalley's visitor in his house where the stolen Capron bonds were found, even Bennett's sailing for Paris tomorrow might have been a coincidence. Of course Blackman was terrified when the Inspector told him that a crook had used his rooming-house to cache stolen property. If Bennett had got this letter, he could have gone right down there, engaged Smalley's old third-floor south square room and got the bonds at his leisure. Smalley made the mistakes of the greenhorn in crime—getting scared, running away, and writing a letter."

Little Needham moved restlessly in his chair. He swallowed. He drew a long breath. There was in his manner the conscious importance of a young man who was paying for the investigation of his *own* case.

"That's all very well, Mr. Drake, and I'm glad you found Mr. Capron's bonds for him. But what I want to know is why, night before last I found my mantelpiece all bloody, and why I was lured out by a lying message from a girl who called herself Gertrude."

Drake answered gravely enough: "You're quite right, Mr. Needham, quite right. And it was a strange sequence of events which led to my finding Smalley's cryptograph letter in the hollow right-hand pillar of your mantelpiece, under the blood-stained pineapple."

It was really almost too much for Needham. He turned so pale that I thought he was going to faint.

Then suddenly the bell rang.

WE all sprang to our feet, and Needham with a little gasp went to open the door. Then I heard a woman's clear voice: "I do hope I'm not late! Mr. Drake said half-past two—"

Yes, there she was—smiling, holding out her hand to each of us in turn. And the chestnut-haired boy was with her.

"Oh, my!" Tommy glanced around. "But you've changed the color of everything—paint—paper—"

Tommy, you know, had been in New Jersey when his mother led these rooms to Needham and moved out.

As the pretty, plump little woman sat down on the sofa, her boy beside her, as she turned her round baby-blue eyes upon Drake, I don't mind confessing that I felt—yes, panicky.

"I should have told you this morning," the detective was saying to her, with his charming deference, "should have told Mr. Needham also, if I had not been held by a professional obligation not to anticipate the action of the police. But I found in the hollow pillar—"

It was a bombshell.

With a leap from the sofa, the boy Tommy threw himself upon Drake.

"Oh, give it to me! You must—it's valuable! He said so! I tried to get it—Mother had gone to the theater—but it stuck so—it just wouldn't turn, and my

hands got all hurt and bloody—I didn't dare make a light—he might come back any minute."

The mother's face went chalk-white.

Drake gently took one of the boy's hands and turned it, so we could see the red marks, the abrasions, on palm and fingers.

"Oh, Tommy!" his mother breathed. "And you told me you tore your hands in sliding down a rough tree!"

"I knew," Drake said kindly, "that the blurred finger-prints were those of a large child or a tiny-handed woman, and only tender flesh would have been so torn by those jagged points, or would have bled so freely. But when I shook hands with Tommy yesterday at the Hotel Majestic, and felt those rough wounds—"

Needham broke in, excitedly: "But who is Gertrude?"

"Oh, there isn't any Gertrude!" Tommy turned right round and faced Needham. "I had to get you out! I knew our old telephone number. I called from a booth round the corner. Uncle Fred told Mother one day that any young man would run after a girl. I just talked like a girl in the hotel talks, and when I ran round here the window was dark, and I ran up the stairs, and—"

Tommy's courage and frankness had surprised me, until I realized that it was his only way of proving his claim to the paper in Drake's possession. But now he turned with frightened eyes and threw himself on his mother. "Oh, Mother, don't scold me! I did find the lost key and I kept it. Sometimes you're gone out so long—I wanted a key for myself—I didn't lie to you, Mother. You never once asked me after I found it!"

"Oh, my poor little boy!" She was crying now. "I don't understand. Why didn't you tell me?"

"But Uncle Fred said I mustn't tell anyone—anyone!"

NEEDHAM'S face was a study. If he was angry at Tommy's intrusion night before last, he was good sport enough to ignore it.

"But what I insist upon knowing," he said with his odd little dignity, "is how a criminal's letter got into my mantelpiece."

Drake nodded. "Tommy," he said, "will you sit down now, quietly, yes, right there on the sofa beside your mother,—and tell Mr. Needham precisely what happened here in this room, two weeks ago last Saturday afternoon, the 20th of June?"

Tommy sat down on the sofa—facing us bravely enough. But he said nothing. He only picked at the braid on his jacket.

"But, Tommy—Tommy darling," his mother pleaded, "you must tell these gentlemen—and tell Mother—you must."

She was no longer coquettish. Something had touched her—I did not know then what it was—with a sense of awe.

Tommy's lips trembled. He raised his clear light-brown eyes to her face—hesitated, drew two or three quick breaths.

"Oh, it was awfully hot—Mother was out when Uncle Fred came, and I coaxed him to take me down to the beach for a swim. But he said—oh, Mother," he broke off, catching hold of her hands, "I promised, I—"

"You will tell," she said, "everything."

He got it out then, gaspingly. "And Uncle—Uncle Fred said he had something valuable in his pocket, and he couldn't leave it in a bathroom locker. But I told him—I told him I'd found a hole in the mantelpiece where I kept dimes in a handkerchief—Mother didn't know the hole was there and—Uncle Fred said we'd be back from the beach before Mother got home—I was going to have dinner with him anyway—and he took out my handkerchief with the dimes and put a—piece of paper in the

hole, and he said it was safer there than in his pocket, but he might get into trouble if anybody knew."

As the last words fairly fell over each other, Drake leaned forward and patted the boy's knee.

"You loyal little brick!" he said.

Drake told us the rest himself, and Mrs. Alexander Marmaduke Malden was no more amazed than Needham, and I were. Of course she had never seen or heard of either of the safe-blowing scoundrels.

Drake said that postmark memorandum made him think that the letter had been extracted from its envelope, and the envelope left—perhaps empty, more likely with some unsuspicious inclosure like an advertisement—for the addressee to find. But who had done it? And who was the addressee? He said it would have been easy for anyone who suspected Bennett the secretary to get into the boarding-house where he lived on West Eighty-fourth Street, the day after the bond-robbery, easy to find some excuse for being left alone in the hall where boarders' letters generally lie on a table or slab.

"A slightly irregular proceeding," the detective said gravely, "but I've heard of its being done in big cases. Had the finder been able to read the cryptograph, he would not have hidden it anywhere; but if he wanted to study it at his leisure, it was safer in that mantel than in his pocket, unless the house caught fire. It was after I learned yesterday from Mr. Needham the name of the lady who was living in these rooms on the 20th of June, and after I shook hands with Tommy at the Hotel Majestic, that I had my case. The rest has been only the verification of details."

"You remember, Howard, I told you yesterday morning that Inspector Sorby took over the safe-blowing case when Detective Malden was killed in an automobile accident. So, knowing already that Tommy Malden was after the paper hidden in the mantel, I asked them at Police Headquarters if the dead detective, Malden, hadn't a nephew, a boy about twelve. They said yes, that the boy had been with his uncle in the wrecked automobile that evening, June 20th, when the young detective was killed, but the boy had escaped without injury. A Coney Island policeman had brought Tommy home to his mother in Gramercy Park—Mrs. Alexander Marmaduke Malden. Tommy has just told you how his uncle, Detective Fred Malden, who first had Sorby's safe-blowing case, hid that paper in the mantelpiece here—because it was too valuable to leave in a bathroom locker."

"Well, of all this world!" Needham leaned back in his chair. "And I thought some scoundrel was preparing to blackmail me!"

"A natural assumption," Drake smiled, "considering the bogus summons from 'Gertrude,' and the bloodstains."

BUT a few minutes later, as my friend and I were strolling homeward up Lexington Avenue, he said: "The more I think about this case, Howard, the more unusual it seems. Just suppose for a moment the carved pineapple hadn't stuck, from the new paint, and that Tommy had secured the paper. He might have loyally kept it for years, as something which could have got his dead uncle 'into trouble,' if anybody knew about it. Yes—an unusual case. Of course, all the surface aspects of it are perfectly clear to you now, the simple bond-robbery, the curious cryptograph letter, the relations between the people. But look deeper—look deeper and what do you see? An old man recovers a fortune in bonds; two criminals three thousand miles apart are brought to justice—because a young detective wanted a swim in the ocean one hot afternoon, and another young man didn't want brown woodwork."

HOMER CROY

When "West of the Water Tower" appeared, the book-reviewers declared that a new star had appeared in the literary heavens, and they guessed at its name, for the book was published anonymously. Later on it was disclosed that Homer Croy was the author. And now he has turned to short stories. A splendid one will appear in an early issue, about a remarkable Gran'ma—one of the 1926 sort. You'll enjoy it from beginning to end.

*When the second act has come
to an end—and the curtain is rung
down amidst whirling applause—when
you mingle outside with the excited
throngs in the lobby
—have a Camel!*



Into the making of this one cigarette goes all of the ability of the world's largest organization of expert tobacco men. Nothing is too good for Camels. The choicest Turkish and domestic tobaccos. The most skilful blenders. The most scientific package. No other cigarette made is like Camels. No better cigarette can be made. Camels are the overwhelming choice of experienced smokers.

WHEN the thrilling second act of the best show of the year has just come to an end. And the stars have taken their curtain calls in answer to round after round of applause. When you join the crowds outside just as pleased and thrilled as yourself —have a Camel!

For no other friend is so cheerful, so resting between acts as Camel. Camel adds its own romantic glamour to the brightness of memorable occasions. No other cigarette ever made—and kept—so many friends. Camels never tire your taste no matter how liberally or zestfully you smoke them. Camels never leave a cigaretty after-taste. All the desire to please, all the skill to serve of the largest tobacco organization in the world, goes into this one cigarette.

So when you leave the theatre pleased and inspired for greater things, when you see life's problems and their solutions clearer —lift the flame and taste the mellowest smoke that ever came from a cigarette.

Have a Camel!



Our highest wish, if you do not yet know Camel quality, is that you try them. We invite you to compare Camels with any cigarette made at any price.

R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company





HARRIET: "No, my mind is made up—I never want to see him again."

⌋ Listerine used as a mouth wash quickly overcomes halitosis (unpleasant breath). ⌋

THE LOST CHORD

(Continued from page 74)

"I can't! He's gone on a business trip, back to New York."

"His uncle's dead, ain't he? He'll know the will quick enough now, without bothering longer with you. He's skipped; that's what he's done. And it serves you right."

"He hasn't skipped!" defended Mary blindly. "He's coming back on the eight o'clock train tonight."

"I'll buy you a new hat if he does. You wait and see."

"You made it all up—he never confessed such a thing, to Natalie Stevens or anyone else!"

"All right—call up Natalie and ask her."

The stricken girl tried to do this. After a fashion she succeeded. And when she finally got the receiver back onto the hook, I thought she was going to collapse. From deathly-white, her complexion had turned a queer, drowned green. "Get out!" she wailed. And at sight of the wreckage they had caused, the three girls "got." "You can be at the depot at eight o'clock tonight and see how contemptible you are," she called after them.

Then she closed her door.

She must have suffered the torments of the damned that afternoon. Nevertheless, around eight o'clock, she appeared at the station. All over town the girls had been advised and were hovering about in the vicinity. Mary saw them and was piteously defiant.

But the train pulled in and its passengers descended. Not until a fortnight later did the repentant Grace confess she had sent him—Forrest Preston—a wire that noon-time which had purposely kept him in New York. So no Forrest alighted on the Paris platform.

The train pulled out and to the northward. The platform was empty—empty except for the one swaying, droopy figure in a shoulder cape, who tried to start away, uttered a little cry and bent over suddenly as though a dagger had pierced her to its hilt. Then off into the late autumn night she stumbled blindly, face ashen, both hands pressed against her side. She turned the corner by the billboards and was lost to view. And she did not come back.

AT four o'clock the next afternoon Mrs. Mathers called up the *Telegraph* office.

"Have you seen anything of Mary Bowen?" she demanded. "She hasn't been to her meals today—and her bed war'n't slept in last night."

We had seen nothing of Mary. Neither had anyone else in the town. Another night went by. Again Mary's bed was unrumpled. Mrs. Mathers came over around nine o'clock and made us go up to her office and break in. "Maybe she's got up there and done somethin' rash," was her suggestion.

But Mary was not in her office. Everything was exactly as it had been when Grace Rawlins entered—even to the half-finished sentence on the machine. Yet we found other things that wrung our hearts: a pad of paper where she had practiced writing "Mrs. Forrest Preston" all over the top sheet, a list of household furnishings, some letters, inconsequential things that Forrest had sent her. I think the most heart-rending was a little scrap-book where the girl had pasted in and saved every picture of a baby which had come to her hand. Seventy-five to a hundred infants, there must have been in the limp little book—babies smiling, babies crying, babies awake and asleep, dressed and *au naturel*.

The boys beat the woods around about Paris—and another group rowed far down the river searching, but Mary never was found by those people in Vermont.

And the next day Forrest came back to Paris.

The minute he entered our office, I knew he had been informed of events; furthermore, I knew his passion for Mary Bowen had ended up genuine, regardless of the motives behind it in the beginning. He showed me the telegram—tears running down his face.

"My God! They've murdered her!" he choked. "Murdered the dearest woman that ever lived!"

"Did you, Forrest?" we asked. "Did you get interested in her at first because you wanted to know?" I asked him point blank.

"May my Maker forgive me for it—yes. At first—until that night at Stevens' when she sang 'The Lost Chord.'"

"I know. Mrs. Stevens told me."

"It was like an angel singing. And—she loved me. She'd have lain down and let me walk on her naked heart!"

"The Lost Chord," mused Sam. "Don't it say somethin' in that piece about hearin' that note again—findin' it again?"

"In heaven! Yes! But I don't want to find Mary in heaven. I want to find her on earth! I'm all broken down inside, somehow." And dropping into a chair, he buried his face in his hands and sobbed like a boy.

We tried to console him, of course. But it was a sorry business. We told him she'd turn up somewhere sooner or later, when deep in our hearts we scarcely believed it ourselves. For even if she hadn't destroyed herself, we felt that the shock she had sustained might have unhinged Mary's reason.

FORREST left finally, and for the ensuing month the town gave him its sympathy freely. A town's mind is a child's mind. And it took the affair with the compassion of a child. In that month no signs of Mary came to hand, and all of us believed the worst. And in proof of how greatly the rich fellow had come to love the little plebeian, we know now that life for him went suddenly to ashes.

What mattered his law-practice, his uncle's wealth (for he had not been appreciably cut from the will), society, other women? He aged five years that winter, and then in April came the announcement that he was going abroad.

He did go abroad. We had other things to engage our attention, and only thought of the affair when we had stenographer's work with no one to do it, or when we strolled past the Preston mansion on Sunday afternoons and remarked on its closed blinds and general atmosphere of tragedy. But occasionally word reached us through people who had seen Forrest—abroad, in New York, Newport, Hot Springs, Palm Beach—that his blasted love-affair in Vermont had taken hold of him deeper than one might suppose for the length of time its course had run. . . .

For three years I had no direct word from him and did not see him. He was no special confidant of mine; there was no reason why I should. Sam and I lost sight of the poignant little romance in the avalanche of newer experiences, other people's cardiac complexes, all the vicissitudes that come as grist into the mill of a country newspaper.

And yet I have had a reason for recording this story. I have set myself to that record because now—three years later—there have been developments in the half-forgotten Bowen-Preston romance that supply belatedly the aspect of a climax. This past year I spent in California, making the homeward trip by way of the Panama Canal. And when our boat was held over for twenty-four hours in Jacksonville, Florida, I went ashore. Thus on an early

evening in this past September, dining in a Jacksonville hotel, I looked across the room.

And there sat Forrest Preston.

It was a moment before I placed him. His changed appearance was responsible. There was much gray at his temples, and lines on his face and around his eyes which no fellow of thirty-five should reveal. Not lines of dissipation, so much as hopelessness. I arose and went over to him.

"Will wonders never cease!" he cried thickly, grasping me and almost hugging me. And he made me sit down at his table by the window, for he was alone—as terribly alone, somehow, as the girl whom he had loved had been alone back in those spring months in Vermont.

"Where am I going?" he repeated a little time later. "I wish to God that I knew. Somehow I'm—drifting around. Lost interest in things somehow."

Well, we visited until late. He drank quite a lot from a hip flask and seemed sort of careless of his speech and deportment. He was slipping badly—which was criminal, for he really had been a man worth while. If he had deceived Mary at the start of their acquaintance, he had suffered his penance and was now clean of that stain. By midnight, when it was time for me to return to the ship, he was sobbing openly.

"She played—'The Lost Chord,'" he reminded me. "I wonder—if I'll ever hear her voice again. Your partner said something about heaven. But I've lost Mary then completely—for I don't believe in heaven. I don't believe in anything. I'm hard inside!"

"See here," said I, "—come on back with me to New York. I'm in a cabin by myself and you can share it. I'll talk to you on the way up. And if you want to go back to Paris, perhaps the change—"

"I'll go with you to New York—I don't mind where I go—but not Vermont! I buried a part of myself in Vermont."

In the end, he went back north with me. Never was truer word spoken than Shakespeare's old saw: "There's a Divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will." We left Jacksonville behind us, and by two o'clock were beyond sight of land. I set myself to soften the poor fellow's cynicism, but it was a thankless task. The man was "cooked hard." Anyhow, a greater Power had our affairs in charge, for—we got into the storm off Hatteras.

And Preston was really softened by a sign from God.

IT was the second day out, along around three in the afternoon, that we entered the area of blow. The sun had disappeared in a haze of lemon; a peculiar greenish tinge hung over the ocean. By four o'clock high seas were running and the barometer was falling swiftly.

I had known many storms at sea during spasmodic trips about old Mother Earth to vary the routine of country publishing, but always without untoward incident my ships had come safely through. A bit of seasickness, perhaps—things rolling about—the vessel plunging and ducking like a gigantic porpoise. Yet never had I seen such a bilious aspect over the face of all things, a presentiment of electrical ferocity, as curdled my marrow in the next few hours before the daylight died altogether. It is a fearful thing—a storm off Hatteras. Worse than a typhoon down the New Hebrides. I have been through both and know.

By five o'clock the wind was yowling a gale; the seas were running hill high. When I went below for dinner, the ocean showed mountainous whitecaps piling and tumbling—my last view of them reminding me of a line of washed clothes blowing in a winter

"More precious than rubies"—seems this smoking tobacco

Old smokers of Edgeworth delight in their friendly rivalries for length of attachment to their favorite brand, and for total poundage incinerated in their trusty pipes.

Mr. Dugan inaugurates another sort of competition—a sort of Long-Distance-Wait Contest. For this loyal Edgeworthian orders his favorite tobacco in May, and then goes on forage rations until August, rather than twist his tobacco taste to accommodate native varieties.

Read Mr. Dugan's letter and be thankful you're where you are!

Philippine Islands

Larus & Bro. Co., Richmond, Va.

Dear Sirs:—Enclosed please find money-order for \$4.65, for which please send me the following: 1—16 oz. glass jar Ready Rubbed; 1—\$1.50 can Qboid; 1—\$1.50 can Plug Slice.

Until recently I have been able to get Edgeworth from a dealer near here, but for the last month he has been "out," and I have been smoking native cigarettes and other so-called tobacco. I realize that it will be three months or so before I hear from this, but I know I'll get it sure by sending direct to you, you won't be "just out." In the meantime I may be able to scare up a little here and there. It's mighty hard to "bum" any Edgeworth from friends in this part of the world. They'd just about as soon give you the key to their safety deposit boxes as they would to the "Old tobacco box" where they keep their Edgeworth. I don't blame them; it's mighty hard to get, and it's terribly hard to go without. I know how the baby felt about the soap now: I won't be happy till I get my Edgeworth.

Yours, almost tearfully,

C. P. Dugan.



Let us send you free samples of Edgeworth so that you may put it to the pipe test. If you like the samples, you'll like Edgeworth wherever and whenever you buy it, for it never changes in quality. Write your name and address to Larus & Brother Company, 8N South 21st Street, Richmond, Va.

We'll be grateful for the

name and address of your tobacco dealer, too, if you care to add them.

Edgeworth is sold in various sizes to suit the needs and means of all purchasers. Both Edgeworth Plug Slice and Edgeworth Ready-Rubbed are packed in small, pocket size packages, in handsome humidors holding a pound, and also in several handy in-between sizes.

To Retail Tobacco Merchants: If your jobber cannot supply you with Edgeworth, Larus & Brother Company will gladly send you prepaid by parcel post a one- or two-dozen carton of any size of Edgeworth Plug Slice or Edgeworth Ready-Rubbed for the same price you would pay the jobber.

twilight up home. Then came the dim illumination of the clammy, half-empty dining-room, pale faces as the oncoming gale shrieked wilder, hardened travelers feeling the qualms of oncoming sickness, officers moving about hurriedly, looking worried. And the barometer going down, down, down.

NINE o'clock came, and Preston got up from his berth, where he had lain down. "I can't stand this!" he said. And I realized he was bellowing the words to make himself heard above the outer tumult. Waves like mauls were hammering at our port. The ship was pitching up and down foreward and aft, as well as rolling from side to side. It came to me that this was to be no ordinary storm. I wondered if the eight hundred passengers elsewhere were as nervous as ourselves. "I'm going up into the saloon and find out," Preston said, and he laced on his shoes.

We reached the saloon, the big main room off the promenade deck, and went up onto its mezzanine balcony. Ten o'clock came, and the ship was commencing to strain. Each time its prow cleft the onward seas, the water-mountains met it squarely, sending shivers through the boat's whole fiber. Outside was a blackness like pitch. Blackness and tumult and a wet hell.

Every deck was awash with water. Passengers in outside staterooms had been ordered inside. I began to grow frightened as I had never been frightened in my life. Suppose, in that epidemic of chaos, we rammed some run-running vessel of which that section of the seas was full? Preston, near me, was ashen.

A few minutes past midnight our after mast came down, wrecking our wireless. It shook the ship and made it falter for a moment like a dull, disastrous detonation of dynamite in our hold. Women began to sob openly. And between twelve and one o'clock, before we actually did side-swipe that other steamer, the pitching and plunging of that boat grew horrible. With every drunken roll it snapped and creaked. Tons upon tons of water pounded at our hatches. Lifeboats were ripped loose and smashed into kindling. Once when the main cabin door blew open, deluging those in the vicinity, a ten-minute battle ensued to get it closed. A ship's officer paused near us around a corner, his clothes drenched with water, a gash across his forehead bleeding down into his eyes.

"We may not make it, Charley," I heard him cry unevenly to some one I could not discern. "The pumps are going in the C hold, but they can't get action!"

I felt a wild clutch on my arm, where I strove to hold myself from being hurled around. It was Preston.

"I don't want to die!" he cried. "Not like this! I haven't got the faith to die!"

"Shut up!" I cried. "Do you want to start a panic here? Instead of talking about dying, get one of those life-preservers—"

I never finished. On the opposite side of the ship, out of a badly battered porthole, I saw a string of lights, horrifyingly close. Another vessel! Almost at once the shock came.

It felt like an earthquake and sounded like a gigantic pin being drawn over an equally mammoth washboard. The whole ship bucked. A woman screamed. A moment of gruesome silence—a silence like that between the planets. . . . Then a voice behind me:

"Damn that woman! Choke her, somebody! We may be hit. But a panic right now will be worse." And then the ship veered to starboard and we tilted.

DON'T ask me to set down the sickening horror of that next few minutes. I believed we were sinking, tossed like a rudderless chip on the chaos, soon to be

drowned like rats in a trap. Every sane man and woman aboard thought likewise. Death was reaching for us. Preston was clutching me so I could scarcely keep my hold.

Dimly in that sequence of confusion I realized a movement of people down over the drop of the balcony and saw the gleam of scarlet on cap and bonnet as a group drew together below us. There were Salvation Army people aboard!

Then amid the shock and the tempest, high above the tumult and the pounding destruction of the storm, I heard a woman's marvelous voice uplifted in song.

From that dining-saloon below us, halting that panic, defying the night and the elements, over-riding Death with the faith born of martyrs, came the bars of that grand old hymn that has in so many tragic hours brought resignation to storm-tossed humanity, sung by a little band of bonneted women who were not afraid to die.

*Jesus, lover of my soul,
Let me to thy bosom fly;
While the nearer waters roll,
While the tempest still is high—*

It seemed in that moment as though every person aboard that foundering vessel, even the ship itself, even the demon-lashed universe, paused to catch the sweet, clear, fearless, high-flung resonance of that old hymn, as with face upraised, eyes closed, hands outspread in benediction over the little group around her, the woman called to Jehovah, Lord God of Hosts. . . .

Never did a woman sing as that woman sang. That spirituality in mundane humanity that separates us from the brutes, that lifts us into communion with the Hosts of Heaven, shone from her face like a lambent light. And as she quickly passed on to the lines of the second verse, I knew in that minute the overwhelming meaning of Faith—Faith triumphant!

And I became aware as well that Forrest Preston had relaxed his grip upon me. Somehow, ludicrously, he was climbing the balcony rail as though to drop into that scene beneath. I clutched for him and he turned.

"It's—it's—"

"I know, I know! But don't stop her now!" For Mary Bowen, in that great moment of all our lives, was "putting herself across" at last—as Sam, my partner, had never dared to dream she would. . . .

The hymn ended. A great quiet seemed to envelop us. A man broke in from the battered chart-house.

"We're coming out of it!" he cried. "We've found the edge of it! We're slipping through!"

I don't know just when it was that I let Preston go. But when I released him, he started down. Neither did I remark on the manner of his going.

I only recall that once again he had heard the Lost Chord of that voice—the voice of the woman he had loved—raised above the wrath of a storm-tossed sea.

And peace and a fair harbor lay ahead!

Samuel Hopkins Adams

Mr. Adams' name is not often seen in magazines nowadays, for he has long been engaged on a novel; but now that its writing is finished, more short stories may be expected. Thus, in an early number of this magazine one will appear—the story of a young man and of a most astonishing girl.



HER wealth of bronze hair perfectly complements the clear olive of her skin, adding greatly to her beauty by using the Oriental tint of Pompeian Bloom.

A Healthy Glow

That's what your cheeks
were meant to have.
Pompeian Bloom
gives the natural color that comes with health

By MADAME JEANNETTE

Famous cosmetician, retained by The Pompeian Laboratories as a consultant to give authentic advice regarding the care of the skin and the proper use of beauty preparations.

I RECENTLY overheard one of my friends say to another: "You have stopped using rouge, my dear. What lovely natural coloring!" But the truth was that she hadn't stopped at all. Like thousands of other women, she had learned about the rouge that would give her cheeks the exquisite natural coloring of a girl in her 'teens. That rouge is Pompeian Bloom.

Today women everywhere realize the necessity of using rouge that matches perfectly their natural skin-tones. And when they use the right shade of Bloom they achieve the wholly natural effect they desire.

From the shade chart you can easily select the particular shade of Pompeian Bloom for your type of complexion.

SHADE CHART for selecting your correct tone of Pompeian Bloom

Medium Skin: The average American woman has the Medium skin-tone—pleasantly warm in tone, with a faint sugges-

tion of old ivory or sun-kissed russet. The *Medium* tone of Pompeian Bloom just suits this type of skin.

If you are slightly tanned, you may find the *Orange* tint more becoming. And sometimes women with Medium skin who have very dark hair get a brilliant result with the *Oriental* tint.

Olive Skin: Women with the true olive skin are generally dark of eyes and hair—and require the *Dark* tone of Pompeian Bloom. If you wish to accent the brilliancy of your complexion, the *Oriental* tint will accomplish it.

Pink Skin: This is the youthful skin, most often found in blondes or red-haired women, and should use the *Oriental* tint.

White Skin: If you have this rare type of skin, use the *Light* tone of Bloom.

Special Note: An unusual coloring of hair and eyes sometimes demands a different selection of Bloom-tone than those above. If in doubt, write a description of your skin, hair and eyes to me for special advice.

Pompeian Bloom, 60c (slightly higher in Canada). Purity and satisfaction guaranteed.

Madame Jeannette
Specialist in Beauty



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1/3 of a 60c box of Bloom

with 1926 Panel and samples — All for 20c

To help you realize the exceptional quality of Pompeian Bloom, we make the special offer above. The 1926 Panel is the most beautiful and expensive one we have ever offered. Size 27 x 7 inches. Art store value 75c to \$1. Sent for two dimes along with 1/3 of a 60c box of Pompeian Bloom and valuable samples of Beauty Powder; Day Cream (protecting); and Night Cream (cleansing); and Madame Jeannette's beauty booklet.



Madame Jeannette,
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That is what gargles, sprays and swabs are for—but their effect lasts only a little while, and they can rarely be used oftener than night and morning.

Formamint provides a scientific throat antiseptic of proven germicidal power with which you can keep up your treatment all day—wherever you may be. That's why it has been endorsed in writing by more than 10,000 doctors.

Carry a bottle of these convenient, pleasant-tasting throat tablets with you, and take them at intervals all day—one every hour or so when the throat is actually sore, one every two or three hours to prevent infection when exposed to cold, disease or dust. All druggists.

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THE OLD HOME TOWN

(Continued from page 52)

dinner any night you will—just any night at all."

If she had set a date herself, or half a dozen dates, he could have alleged an engagement. But he could not think of a blanket engagement fast enough. After a pause she broke his tortured silence with a sweetish:

"You really must dine somewhere, and you can surely spare me one evening."

The Ian Craigie who could not permit his humblest laborer to be abused by a boss was hardly the man to slap a polite old woman in the face, and so he groaned:

"You name the day, and I'll be there."

"Oh, you charming man! Shall we say Thursday week?"

"Thursday week it is."

"And have you any friends you would especially like to see?"

"I don't know much of anybody very well. My first acquaintances were Judge Nolan and Ben Webb."

"Dear Judge Nolan, of course, and B—Did you say Ben Webb?"

"Ben Webb, yes. Do you know him?"

"Oh—indeed yes. Rather!" Mrs. Budlong was rathering nowadays. "I'll be delighted to ask him—and just a few others of our leading people. It's ever so sweet of you to come! Thursday week, then—at eight?"

"Thursday week at eight. Thank you ever so much."

"Goo-oo-ood-by!"

Craigie put away the telephone with a rueful look as if it were a cup of bitters he had just drained. Mrs. Budlong's look was no less rueful. She must invite Ben Webb! Great heavens! Ben Webb—the plumber!

Well, what must be, must be.

And so Ben Webb received an answer to an old prayer of his—a prayer in anger that he might live to receive an invitation to Mrs. Budlong's so that he could refuse it.

And, as usually happens with prayers of that sort, when they are granted they are always out of date, and usually unwelcome. Mrs. Budlong sent Ben a card. She had not trusted herself to invite Ben Webb over the telephone which she had formerly used for asking him to come up and unfreeze the bathroom pipes or see why the gas gave more sweetness than light.

BEN laid Mrs. Budlong's card on his mother's workbasket and watched her grasp before he groaned:

"What on earth have I been doing, that that old harpy has begun to pick on me?"

"She's just beginning to realize what a great man you are. It says here, 'To meet Mr. Ian Craigie.' She must know how much he likes you. The old snob is just toadying to you."

This was so good that Ben roared with laughter. And now he could get his revenge by refusing. But even as he sat down and tried to answer the note in the third person that Mrs. Budlong affected, he began to wonder. He had already written, with extra measure in spelling.

"Mr. Benjamin Webb is much obliged to Mrs. Budlong for your invitation but I got another—I have a previous engage—"

Suddenly it came to him that Odalea would undoubtedly be there. He might sit next to her! He might get a chance to stare at her across the table for an hour or two—to feed his hungry eyes on her beauty and hear her talk and laugh!

He tore up his regrets and wrote an acceptance in a fine mingling of the first, second and third persons. Then he went to the tailor and threatened to wring his neck if he did not make a "dress-soot" that fitted and made Ben look like he had just stepped out of a Fifth Avenue bus. He went to the Men's Shop and demanded the latest shirt,

collar, tie and socks as worn by the most swollen swells. He had a haircut and remembered Petunia's warnings against trying to look like a brakeman.

He looked rather foolish in his dressed-up distress, but Odalea was not at the dinner. She would not have come if she had been invited—especially not if she had known that Ben was to be there, for his name was a fulminate to Tom Merrick and never failed to explode him.

The dinner was a long torture to Ben, and he enjoyed none of it until Mrs. Budlong, still following the old custom, herded the ladies into the parlor and left the gentlemen to their cigars and coffee.

Now Ben found himself talking to Ian Craigie and to other engineers, and he felt at ease. They wondered at the shrewdness of his mind. He was any woman's fool, but he was no man's. The men lingered in the dining-room for half an hour, to Mr. Budlong's delight and Mrs. Budlong's rage.

WHEN they dribbled into the parlor at last, Ian Craigie infuriated his hostess by making his excuses and hurrying away. Whereupon Ben made the same excuses and hurried after.

Ian Craigie, seeing Ben, dismissed his car and walked with him as far as Ben's home. With the kindest of intentions, he said, remembering vaguely:

"By the way, how are you coming along with that pretty Lail girl you were in love with?"

Ben threw him a look of terrified amazement and terrifying resentment as he answered:

"How'm I coming along? How fast is the Mississippi flowing north?"

He had said it with a grin. But such a grin!

Craigie remembered, now, that Ben had been hopeless of Odalea before. He resolved to mind henceforth his own business, which was the easy matter of conquering the Father of Waters, and not at all the rearrangement of the currents of love. He had blundered in again on Ben's tragedy, and he was as distressed as Lincoln was when he passed the poor hog in the mire. Only, Lincoln could go back and get the porker out, but Craigie could be of no help whatever—at least not in that direction. But perhaps there was another way.

There was in the man the obstinate home-ness of many of the great. Though Craigie numbered among his acquaintances the princes of the world, the plutocrats, the past masters of learning and accomplishment, and received from them the homage due his gigantic achievements, he did not seek among them his friends or the companions of what little leisure he had. When he wearied of his godlike dreams of creation, he walked like a god among the lowly people. If his work took him away from the solace of his wife's devotion, he strolled in solitude, or visited his ailing laborers, or called on humble acquaintances.

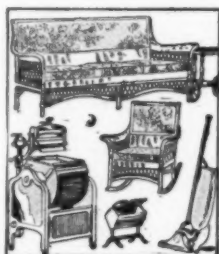
He had found in Ben Webb a certain kinship, a lonely genius like his own. He saw in Ben a village Faraday, with the quiet wisdom of a Newton and the restless inquiry of an Edison. He could see that Ben reveled in great scientific principles and theories as a poet feels epic splendors, and in little ingenuities of invention as a poet solves intricate rhythms and compels strange thoughts to rhyme. They were poets met in Philistia. He lingered at Ben's gate trying to talk off the mistake he had made, until Ben said: "Wont you come in for a smoke?"

"I always stop smoking when my work starts, but I think I will sneak a cigar to-night."

He followed Ben into the house, where



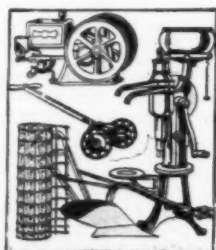
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his mother was sitting up to hear about the party. She greeted Craigie as if he were welcome, but a little late in calling on her royal son.

Craigie sat a long while, soothed with the cricket-chirp of rocking chairs and with Mrs. Webb's placid industry, the conversation of the wood crackling in the stove, and the casual exchange of ideas with Ben, whose brilliance of mechanical wit was not hidden from Craigie by his careless dialect.

Craigie mentioned to Ben a number of the problems the dam was creating by its bigness. More than once Ben's mind darted across some cloudy difficulty like a lightning spark and lighted up the murk. For mechanical riddles Ben had a feminine intuition, but for the riddles of love he had so little skill that he would not even try to solve his own. He simply gave it up.

Suddenly Craigie startled himself and Ben by saying:

"Why don't you come over and join our organization, since you know so much about the river and about machinery?"

Ben's answer was a gasp of awe: "Gosh!"

This invitation was to Ben a loftier honor than the Nobel prize would have been. He had been dimly offended by all these foreigners pouring in like Huns to steal the river from its rightful heirs, its very children. It had chafed his soul to be left idle when his brain was swirling with ideas and ambitions. But he had never dreamed of asking for a share in the work.

And now he was to be admitted to the sacred priesthood; he was to be one of the makers of the only kind of history that interested him—the history of little man's conquest of nature by the manipulation of her laws so cleverly as to make them overthrow themselves and turn the all-powerful into the all-obedient.

WITH characteristic tact Craigie treated Mrs. Webb as if the decision were hers, since she was the queen-mother of the gifted child.

"We need your son in a hundred places," he said, "and I don't know just what to offer him. The rough preliminary work is out of the way. The material has been arranged for and ordered and is coming in fast—quite a lot of it, too—fifteen miles of railroad track, nineteen locomotives, a hundred and forty-two cars, six thousand different kinds of tools and parts, three and a half million pounds of structural steel, ten million feet of lumber, derrick cars, stone-crushers, concrete-mixers, fifty miles of iron pipe, forty-four steam boilers, three hundred thousand cubic yards of sand, six hundred and fifty thousand barrels of cement—and a few things like that."

"Great land of Goshen!" gasped Mrs. Webb, befuddled. "How can the river ever hold it all?"

"Hold it all? The old alligator will eat it all up and call for more if we're not careful—and lucky; especially if we're not lucky. The worst of it is the old river

won't stop running for a single minute even to let us spit on our hands. We've got to let all the water through as it comes along, and nobody knows how it's going to come along or when. We can't even stop the boats from going up and down, and the railroads must be kept running along and across the stream. So you see we need your son's fine brain. The only question is: Can we afford it?"

"I don't see how you could make out to get along without it," said Mrs. Webb as if she were stating the most manifest of facts.

"No more do I. But what salary will he have to have?"

"You don't mean you're going to pay me?" said Ben. "Why, I thought you were going to charge me admission to the club. I'd pay all I got to join—and more."

"All right!" said Craigie. "We'll figure out a bill and send it to you. And now what do you say to a little walk? I need some air, and I want to see if the old river is still where I left it this afternoon."

"Bundle up good!" said Mrs. Webb, and insisted on swaddling Ben in mufflers and sweaters till he was almost lost to view.

"She's never got over tucking me in of nights," said Ben.

As soon as he was out of her sight and lost in the air, so mild for the late autumn as to seem warm, he flung off his smothering muffler and hung it on the skeleton of what was a rosebush in summer. Then he and Craigie struck out at a great pace along the street that led to the river.

IT was grand to be men together, an engineer and a mechanic, with men's problems to consider, instead of the sickly bafflements of love. But the way to the bluffs led past the home of Odalea, and the car that Tom Merrick had hired with an option of purchase, was standing at the curb. Behind the drawn curtains with the lamplight gilding their edges, Tom Merrick was undoubtedly wooing Odalea.

Craigie thought of what Ben must be thinking of, and though neither of them mentioned it, Odalea was an obsession in their thoughts even when they stood on the brim of the heights and stared down at the chaos of the constructions already begun, the buildings erected on both sides of the river, and the cofferdams pushing out into the wallow of the vast python, the brainless, endless, resistless monster that went gliding by forever and never getting past.

As they turned to walk back, and passed Odalea's home again, Tom Merrick's car was still there. But Ben regarded it with interest rather than despair. What if he became a power in the dam, at a big salary? Why should he stand aside and let these foreigners run away with his girl without even putting up a fight?

He had a dress-suit, too. Maybe if Odalea saw him in it, she would think he wasn't so worse.

After all, she had never refused him. She had let him kiss her once. She had let him hold her in his arms. Maybe, way back in that lost paradise, if he had only asked the question she would have answered yes! He had given her up without a struggle when he might have had her to wife all these long dismal years!

He remembered telling her once what a crime it was that the Mississippi had been allowed to waste its incalculable power

for centuries. Yet what an infinity of happiness he had allowed to run to waste in the love that Odalea might have given him—might yet give him.

That last smile of hers, how sweet it was, how fond! Tomorrow he would find a way to tell her that he was to be one of Ian Craigie's right-hand men, and to ask her if—if—

Tomorrow came, and he had not been able to muster up the courage or devise the excuse for calling on Odalea. But he told his mother that he was going to leave his shop early, and asked her to meet him and help him pick out some new clothes. He was going a-wooing.

In Carthage people were forever meeting one another, and it was not strange that Ben and his mother should meet Odalea. She was coming out of McGrath's drug-store, where she had bought a large supply of headache powders for the headaches she was always pretending to have as an excuse for not seeing Tom Merrick. Tom was jealous of those headaches, and this preparation for more of them angered him so that when he saw Ben Webb, he had just time to mutter:

"Remember your promise! And keep it if you don't want me to cut his heart out."

Ben lifted his hat and said:

"Howdy, Ody!"

But Odalea pretended neither to see him nor to hear him.

How was Ben to know that she cut him to keep Tom Merrick from cutting his heart out? The worst of it was that Ben's mother was included in the snub. That was cruel! Ben was staggered. But Mrs. Webb was in a humor to do a bit of heart-cutting-out herself. It was Odalea's heart that she wanted.

Chapter Twenty-eight

WHEN Ben and his mother reached the tailor's, they were both so dazed that they went on past, before they remembered their errand. Mrs. Webb tried to laugh about it, and turned Ben round to retrace his steps; but he said with a sickly laugh:

"What's the use wasting any more clothes on me? I got enough. I'll send the money to Petunia or Guido. They're where they can do some good with fancy clothes."

She saw that his mind was locked, and they went past the tailor's again, to the home that was always a refuge, even though only such a refuge as a prison is to a jailbird who has grown too used to it to be comfortable at large.

Neither of the Webbs had the faintest inkling of Odalea's true motive or the panic that made her action possible. Ben had a shadowy intuition that Odalea was incapable of doing so odious and vicious a thing as she seemed to have done; but manlike he gave his intuitions little heed, and simply left the miserable puzzle for time to solve.

Mrs. Webb had no doubts whatever. Womanlike, she never believed that any woman ever did a thing unintentionally. And it never occurred to her that "Love one another!" had been addressed to women as well as men. It was all perfectly plain to her, and her heart was divided between blazing rage at all the Lails that ever lived, and utter woe at the pain she saw in her son's eyes. She kept herself in till the door was closed on them, and then she expressed herself with all the vigor of a she-bear whose cub has been wounded and is bleeding.

Ben loved her for the love that inflamed her wrath, but it did not comfort him to have Odalea assailed, and it filled him with exquisite uneasiness to have his mother break down and weep over him. Ben Webb

Peters' Education

Now that the Peters' are back in the dear homeland, they find that their son is in some difficulties at his college. Mr. Peters, therefore, must needs fare forth and investigate. Mr. Benchley tells you what form the investigation took, and its results, in the next issue.



Miss Adrienne Dore—2nd Prize
 "I feel certain that the judges who awarded me second place in the Atlantic City Beauty Contest were pleased with the appearance of my hair. I used Mulsified Coconut Oil Shampoo only, because it gives the hair a thick, glossy appearance that no other shampoo does."

**Miss Fay Lanphier—1st Prize
 "MISS AMERICA"**
 "In being awarded the first prize and chosen as 'Miss America' at the Atlantic City Pageant, I know the beauty of my hair played an important part with the judges.
 "The soft, silky appearance of my hair has always been admired. Thousands have told me how beautiful it looks.
 "I am always pleased to tell people that I keep it that way by shampooing with Mulsified Coconut Oil Shampoo, as I have found nothing else that keeps it so bright and lovely."

Miss Beatrice Roberts—3rd Prize
 "I feel that shampooing with Mulsified has been a wonderful help to me in winning the Atlantic City Beauty Contest, as it has enabled me to keep my hair looking its best and no girl can be beautiful without beautiful hair."

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How "Miss America" And Her Two Loveliest Rivals—Keep Their Hair Beautiful

NOT long ago in Atlantic City, the pleasure center of the east, the Nation's Greatest Beauty Contest was held. From every state, from every principal city came the loveliest girls in all America.

Appearing before the foremost artists, the best recognized authorities on beauty, they were judged.

Three were chosen: Fay Lanphier of San Francisco, Adrienne Dore of Los Angeles, and Beatrice Roberts of New York—**AMERICA'S THREE MOST BEAUTIFUL GIRLS.**

Each had beautiful, irresistible, well-kept hair—**AND THEY WON.**

These girls caught and held the eye of the judges with their beautiful hair, as beautiful hair has always caught and held the eye of man.

There is real magic in the hair. It is a frame or setting upon which the most beautiful, as well as the plainest woman, must depend.

Fortunately, beautiful hair is no longer a matter of luck.

You, too, can have beautiful hair if you shampoo it properly.

Proper shampooing is what makes it soft and silky. It brings out all the real life and lustre, all the natural wave and color and leaves it fresh-looking, glossy and bright.

When your hair is dry, dull and heavy, lifeless, stiff and gummy, and the strands cling together, and it feels harsh and disagreeable to the touch, it is because your hair has not been shampooed properly.

While your hair must have frequent and regular washing to keep it beautiful, it cannot stand the harsh effect of ordinary soaps. The free alkali in ordinary soaps soon dries the scalp, makes the hair brittle and ruins it.

That is why thousands of women, everywhere, now use Mulsified coconut oil shampoo. This clear, pure and entirely greaseless product brings out all the real beauty of the hair and cannot possibly injure. It does not dry the scalp or make the hair brittle, no matter how often you use it.

If you want to see how really beautiful you can make your hair look, just follow this simple method.

A Simple, Easy Method

FIRST, wet the hair and scalp in clear, warm water. Then apply a little Mulsified coconut oil shampoo.

Two or three teaspoonfuls will make an abundance of rich, creamy lather. This should be rubbed in thoroughly and briskly with the finger tips, so as to

loosen the dandruff and small particles of dust and dirt that stick to the scalp.

After rubbing in the rich, creamy Mulsified lather give the hair a good rinsing. Then use another application of Mulsified, again working up a lather and rubbing it in briskly as before. After the final washing, rinse the hair and scalp in at least two changes of clear, fresh, warm water. This is very important.

Just Notice the Difference

YOU will notice the difference in your hair even before it is dry, for it will be delightfully soft and silky.

After a Mulsified shampoo you will find your hair will dry quickly and evenly and have the appearance of being much thicker and heavier than it really is.

If you want to always be remembered for your beautiful, well-kept hair, make it a rule to set a certain day each week for a Mulsified coconut oil shampoo. This regular weekly shampooing will keep the scalp soft and the hair fine and silky, bright, fresh-looking and fluffy, wavy and easy to manage.

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was one of those lonely souls that never know what to do with sympathy. When he saw his mother breaking her heart over his own breaking heart, he squirmed with a sense rather of foolishness than tragedy.

He tried to hide in the evening paper and to find consolation in an article describing the magnitude of the new dam, a theme of unfailing marvel to him.

"Talk about Mahomet and the mountain, Ma," he said abruptly, "the blamed old mountain has come right to me! You used to be always fretting because I couldn't get away from Carthage to one of the big cities, where I'd have some op'tunity to let my—genius, as the feller called it—expand.

"Well, if I'd gone to Ch'cago, or Boston or N'York, think what I'd 'a' missed. By stickin' close to my knittin', I've been rewarded by havin' the biggest thing in all creation set right down at my feet. And Ian Craigie, the biggest engineer going, drops in at the bank when I'm tryin' to borrow money for Petunia and we strike up a friendship, and here he is droppin' in on us to ask me to help him out with the dam."

"It just shows that the Lord rewards those who sacrifice themselves for others," his mother waived. "All your life you've given up everything for everybody else, and the dam isn't a mite bigger than you deserve."

WHILE Ben did not share her religious faith that everything was for the best and that sorrows were always blessings in disguise, he never tried to reason with her. His one endeavor now was to lure her from her contradictory conviction that Odalea Lail was an unmitigated bane in the disguise of a blessing. Ben harped on the dam:

"Well, if the Lord sent me the dam as a reward, He was certainly no piker. Did you ever realize just what a whopper this ninth wonder of the world is going to be?"

"Pretty big, I expect," she sighed. "But you ought to be building it yourself so that you could show those Lails just what—"

"Did you know that Ian Craigie—and I—are going to lay across old Mississipp' a concrete monolith with a total linear measurement of two and a half miles?"

"I want to know!" she gasped, charmed to hear him use the big words that he handled so deftly when they were in his field of mechanical lore.

"Yep! The dam itself will be fifty-three feet high and forty-two feet wide at the base, and twenty-nine at the top—with room for a three-track railroad along it. And it's to contain thirty turbines and thirty generators."

"What can she see in that homely, lumbering—"

"Speaking of lumbering things, the turbines are to be the biggest ever heard of—each one of 'em is to have an overload capacity of"—he referred to the paper in his lap—"of thirteen thousand five hundred horsepower."

"That's quite a lot of horses, isn't it? Why, those Lails! Really! I declare I just—"

"And each generator will have a capacity of seven thousand five hundred kilowatts. Know what a kilowatt is?"

"No!"

"Want to know?"

"No!"

"Well, it's a thousand watts. Mr. Watt was an old gentleman who did a lot for electricity, so they named a unit of power after him, just like they did for Herf Ohm and the dago Volta and for old man Ampere. What a great thing to have a word made out of your name! Talk about your Shakespeares and Homers and James Whitcomb Rileys and the kind of fame that Guido wants—and will get, you bet—why,

if I could have something scientific named after me like a coulomb or a joule, so's people would say a thousand years from now: 'That thing amounts to a hundred webbs or a centiwebb'—well, I'd be willing to let all the world go by."

"Even Odalea Lail?"

"She's gone by, Ma. Leave the poor kid alone, can't you? But you were askin' what's a kilowatt. Well, it's a thousand watts; or, say, the drag of one and a third horses—a horse and a colt, like. And every one of those thirty generators is to turn out an alternating current stepped up to a hundred and ten thousand volts for transmission. Those generators could light every home in the United States. Why, if you stretched a line of lamp-posts a hundred feet apart like the lamp-posts in this town, one of those generators would light all of them, from San Francisco to Maine, and when all of them are finished, they would light a highway almost to the moon."

"A lot of good that would do!" said Mrs. Webb.

"Well, they don't intend to use it for that purpose, but what they will do first is to stretch a line of tall steel towers forty miles north and a hundred and forty-four miles south and hang copper cables on 'em. In that way every street in Saint Louis will be lighted from here, and every trolley in Saint Louis is to be run from here. And the adjustment is to be so neat that whenever an old lady stops a street-car in Saint Louis, a little water will be cut off one of these turbines up here."

The magnificence of these figures simply passed by the science-deaf ears of Mrs. Webb, but the picture of the old lady was vivid as a flash of lightning, and her reaction was true to her character:

"It's a lot of trouble to take for an old woman. If I was in her place, I'd stay on the car."

"I'll have to tell Ian Craigie that! He'll love it! I'll say, my mother thinks the dam is going to a lot of trouble just to convenience an old lady in Saint Louis."

"The worst of it is," his mother said, "that the dam is making old lady Lail so snooty that she and her precious daughter think they're too good for my boy."

"But if the dam makes your boy so rich that the Lails will look like tramps alongside the Webbs—"

"Then I hope you'll turn up your nose at 'em and look the other way."

BEN tried to imagine himself snubbing Odalea. He could fancy himself driving a gilded automobile or sitting in the back seat behind two gilded chauffeurs, but when he cast a haughty glance at Odalea, he saw her trudging along with a child of Tom Merrick's on either side while Tom Merrick, as a crippled invalid, lay helpless in a shabby home.

The picture made him wince, and he honestly hoped that if Tom Merrick won Odalea for his wife, he would not suffer any of the hideous mutilations or versatile deaths that would inevitably accompany the building of the dam—the toll of human sacrifice that every great work exacts, with whimsicality of choice but relentless certainty.

He wished that he himself might be the sacrificial scapegoat in place of Odalea's man. And if she wanted another man, he would just as lief be dead.

The newspaper fell from his hand. What was the use of building the damn' dam, anyway? What was the use of toil? and science? and invention? Who was any the happier for all of them?

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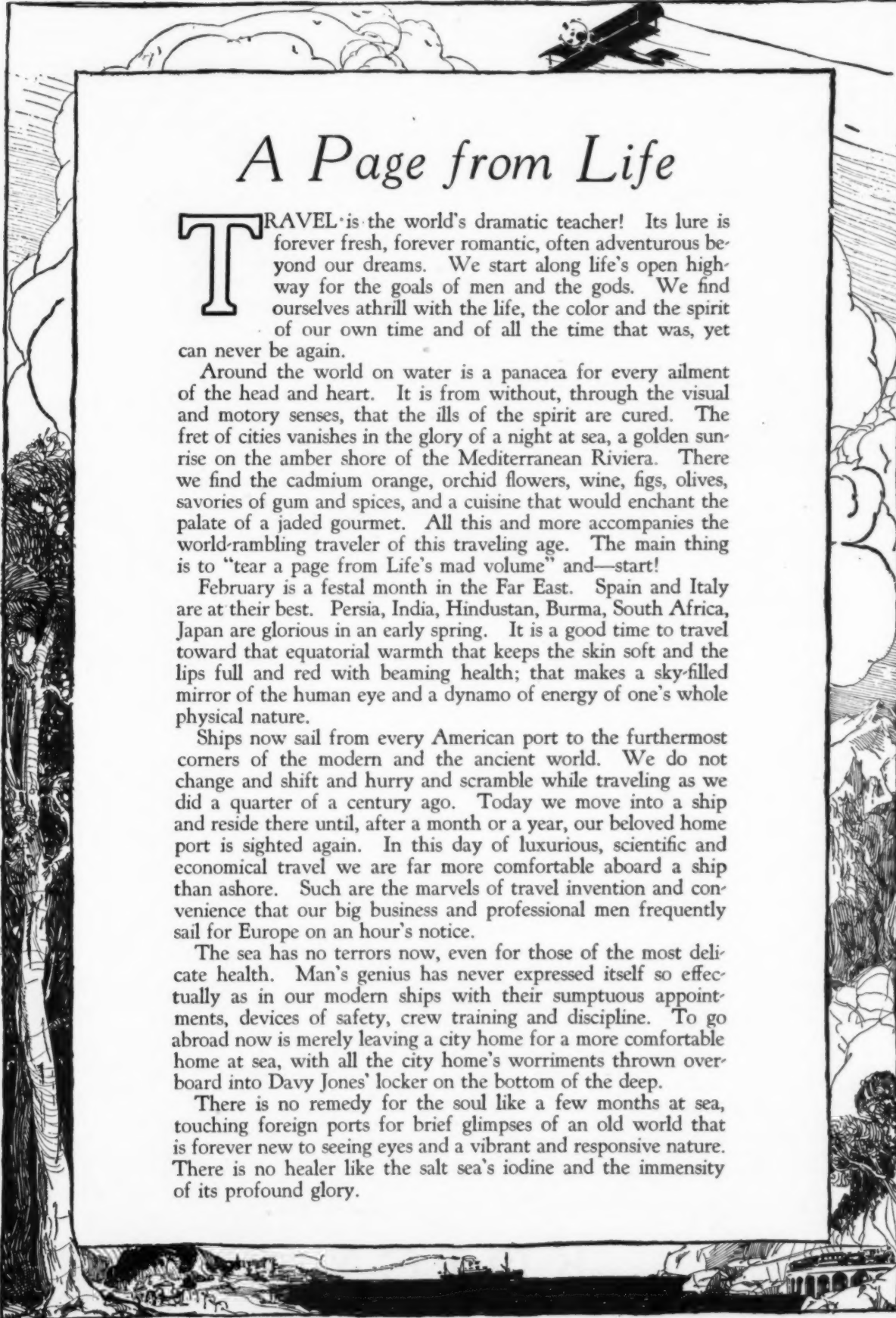
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THE CUSTOMS OF THE COUNTRY

(Continued from page 55)

nizable. This bothered Mr. Peters not at all, as he wouldn't have recognized them anyway.

"Seems pretty good to see the Old Lady again, doesn't it?" said an enthusiast who blocked Mr. Peters' way to the smoking-room.

"What old lady?" said Mr. Peters, very susceptible to insults to his wife after two days of imaginary battles in her defense.

"The Statue of Liberty," beamed the patriot.

"No spik Inglis," said Mr. Peters, and pushed his way into the saloon. He wished that he had thought of this ruse before. His satisfaction in it was secondary now, however, for his mind was full of ways and means. If his other murders had been skillful, this one was going to be a master-stroke. He had sat all the night before in his room fingering his homicidal kit, discarding this agency of death, holding out that one for further consideration. It had finally narrowed down to the pocket-gun and the poison-needle, and he had chosen the gun because it would be more spectacular. The possibility that his old hunter's luck might desert him this time and that he might be really arrested on the technical charge of smoking on a steamship pier did not bother him in the least. It would be worth it. He had seen almost all there was to see in life anyway.

THE hours and hours of waiting until the boat had been warped into her berth and the gangplank dropped left Mr. Peters in a state of excitement which approximated hysteria. Mrs. Peters well knew what was in store for some one, and hoped only that it would not be noisy. She waited nervously by the trunks under the large sign "P" and made little prayers that her husband could find no inspector to come and open them then; so that she might send him to the hotel and attend to the matter herself. But her prayers died on her lips when she saw Mr. Peters pushing his way through the jungle of trunks and bags and crates, followed by an unlucky man wearing an official's cap.

"He looks as if he had a family, too," sighed Mrs. Peters, and her gray eyes filled.

Mr. Peters stood behind one of the trunks with his hand in his pocket. A little bead of sweat trickled out from under his hat-band right in front of his ear. She had never seen him so nervous over his work.

"These your trunks?" asked the inspector. He was a large man and wore spectacles. It was cold on the pier, and he had his overcoat collar turned up.

"Yes," said Mr. Peters belligerently.

"Let's see," said the man, looking over the declarations. "You have a hundred and ten dollars' worth declared here, and the lady has a hundred and twenty-five."

"The lady is my wife," said Mr. Peters, curtly.

"How do you do!" said the inspector. "Now you probably have worn some of these things, haven't you? We can cross them off if you have, and then you will be within your hundred dollars." And he beamed pleasantly at Mrs. Peters. "May I look at these articles?"

Mr. Peters opened the trunks sullenly. "They're all right here on top, aren't they," asked the man. "I guess they're all right." And he lifted one corner of the contents of the tray and felt apologetically underneath.

"What is in that bundle?" he asked.

"A statue," said Mr. Peters, narrowing his eyes until they were like two slits.

"Look out it doesn't get broken," said

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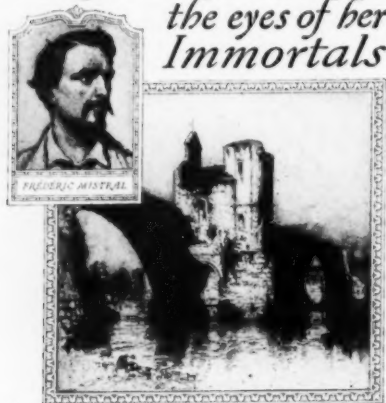
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the inspector. "It would be a shame to have carried it all the way across the ocean and have it smashed at home." And he laughed pleasantly.

"Do you want me to unwrap it?" asked Mr. Peters.

"Never mind. I guess you haven't got any opium in it, have you?" And the man laughed very hard this time, as he stuck the official labels on the trunk and bags. "Here, porter," he said to a man who was standing by, "help close up these trunks and get them on a truck. You'll be wanting a taxi, I suppose. If you'll take my advice, you'll get one of those taxies over there. They're cheaper. And now if you'll step this way with me, sir—" and he turned to Mr. Peters, "—we'll fix you up in a jiffy and get you O. K'd. It will cost you a quarter for the stamp. . . . No, don't give it to me. Give it in at the window.

People might think you were bribing me." And he roared with laughter at this, his final sally.

MR. PETERS returned from the window in silence. The trunks and bags were piled on a cab, and they jounced and jolted over the cobblestones on the way to their hotel. Still he said nothing. Mrs. Peters, relieved of the strain of the last hour, cried quietly to herself. She looked now and again at her husband, sitting huddled down into his overcoat, hands in his pockets, hat over his eyes and feet up on the seat in front of him, a chromo of dejection and frustration. She felt that it would be better not to speak to him for a little while.

Suddenly a muffled report filled the stuffy closeness of the cab. Mr. Peters winced slightly but did not move. He had shot himself in the foot.

THE RICH BOY

(Continued from page 79)

dinner, then four or five raw cocktails in somebody's room, and a pleasant confused evening. He regretted that this afternoon's groom wouldn't be along—they had always been able to cram so much into such a night: they knew how to attach women and how to get rid of them, how much consideration any girl deserved from their intelligent hedonism. A party was an adjusted thing—you took certain girls to certain places, and spent just so much on their amusement; you drank a little, not much more than you ought to drink, and at a certain time in the morning you stood up firmly and said you were going home. You avoided college boys, sponges, future engagements, fights, sentiment and indiscretions. That was the way it was done. The rest was dissipation.

In the morning you were never violently sorry—you made no resolutions, but if you had overdone it and your heart was slightly out of order, you went on the wagon for a few days without saying anything about it, and waited until an accumulation of nervous boredom projected you into another party.

The lobby of the club was unpopulated. In the bar three very young alumni looked up at him, momentarily and without curiosity.

"Hello there, Oscar," he said to the bartender. "Mr. Cahill been around this afternoon?"

"Mr. Cahill's gone to New Haven."

"Oh—that so?"

"Gone to the ball-game. Lot of men gone up."

ANSON looked once again into the lobby, considered for a moment and then walked out and over to Fifth Avenue. From the broad window of another of his clubs—one that he had scarcely visited in five years—a gray man with watery eyes stared down at him. Anson looked quickly away—something about that figure sitting in vacant resignation, in supercilious solitude, depressed him. He stopped and retracing his steps, started over Forty-seventh Street toward Teak Warden's apartment. Teak and his wife had once been his most familiar friends—it was a household where he and Dolly Karger had been used to go in the days of their affair. But Teak had taken to drink, and his wife had publicly remarked to people that Anson was a bad influence on him. The remark reached Anson in an exaggerated form—when it was finally cleared up, the delicate spell of intimacy was broken, never to be renewed.

"Is Mr. Warden in?" he inquired.

"They've gone to the country."

The fact unexpectedly cut at him. They were gone to the country, and he hadn't known. Two years before, he would have

known the date, the hour, come up at the last moment for a final drink, and planned his first visit to them. Now they had gone without a word.

Anson looked at his watch and considered a week-end with his family, but the only train was the local, which would jolt through the aggressive heat for four hours. And tomorrow in the country, and Sunday—he was in no mood for bridge on the porch with undergraduates, and dancing after dinner at a rural road-house, a diminutive of gayety which his father had judged too well.

"Oh no," he said to himself. "No."

He was a dignified, impressive young man—rather stout now, but otherwise unmarked by dissipation. He could have been cast for a pillar of something,—at times you were sure it was not society, at others nothing else,—for the law or for the church. He stood for a few minutes on the sidewalk in front of a Forty-seventh Street apartment-house. . . . For almost the first time in his life he had nothing whatever to do.

Then he began to walk briskly up Fifth Avenue, as if he had just been reminded of an important engagement there. The necessity of dissimulation is (despite Jack London's intellectual valets) one of the few characteristics that we share with dogs, and I think of Anson on that day as some well-bred specimen who had been disappointed in a familiar back yard. He was going to see Nick, once a fashionable bartender in demand at all private dances, and now employed in cooling non-alcoholic champagne among the labyrinths of a Park hotel.

"Nick," he said, "what's happened to everything?"

"Dead," Nick said.

"Make me a whisky sour." Anson handed a pint bottle over the counter. "Nick, the girls are different. I had a girl in Brooklyn, and she got married last week without letting me know."

"That a fact? Ha-ha-ha!" said Nick diplomatically. "Slipped it over on you!"

"Callously," said Anson. "Especially since I was out with her the night before."

"Ha-ha-ha," said Nick, "ha-ha-ha!"

"Do you remember the wedding, Nick, in Hot Springs, where I had the waiters and the musicians singing 'God save the King?'"

"Now, where was that, Mr. Hunter?" Nick scratched his head. "Seems to me that was—"

"Next time they were back for more, and I began to wonder how much I'd paid them."

"Seems to me that was at Mr. Frenholm's wedding."

"Don't know him," said Anson decisively. He was offended that a strange name should



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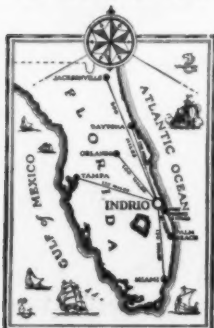
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intrude upon his reminiscences; Nick perceived this.

"Naw—aw—" he admitted. "I ought to know that. It was one of *your* crowd—Brakins, Baker—"

"Bicker Baker," said Anson responsively. "They put me in a hearse after it was over, and covered me up with flowers and drove me away."

"Ha-ha-ha!" said Nick. "Ha-ha-ha!"

Nick's simulation of the old family servant paled presently, and Anson went upstairs to the lobby. He looked around; his eyes met the glance of an unfamiliar clerk at the desk, then fell upon a flower from the morning's marriage hesitating in the mouth of a brass cuspidor. He went out and walked slowly toward the blood-red sun over Columbus Circle. Suddenly he turned around, and retracing his steps to the Plaza, immured himself in a telephone booth.

Later he said that he tried to get me three times that afternoon, that he tried everyone who might be in New York, men and girls he had not seen for years—an artist's model of his college days whose faded number was still in his address-book—Central told him that even the exchange existed no longer. At length his quest roved into the country, and he held brief disappointing conversations with emphatic butlers and maids. So and so was out, riding, swimming, playing golf—sailed for Europe last week. "Who shall I say phoned?"

It was intolerable that he should pass the evening alone—the private reckonings, which one always plans for a moment of leisure, lost every charm when the solitude was enforced. There were always women of a sort, but the ones he knew had temporarily vanished, and to pass the evening in the hired company of a stranger never occurred to him; he would have considered that there was something shameful and secret about it—the diversion of a traveling salesman in a strange town.

Anson paid the telephone bill,—he and the girl exchanged a smile at its size,—and for the second time that afternoon started to leave the hotel and go he knew not where. Near the revolving door the figure of a woman stood sidewise to the light. A sheer beige cape fluttered at her shoulders when the door turned, and each time she looked impatiently toward it as if she were weary of waiting. At the first sight of her, a strong nervous thrill of familiarity went over him, but not until he was within five feet of her did he realize that it was Paula.

"Why, Anson Hunter—"

His heart turned over.

"Why, Paula—"

"Why, this is wonderful. I can't believe it! Anson!"

SHE took both his hands, and he saw in the freedom of the gesture that the memory of him had lost poignancy for her. But not for him—he felt that old mood that she evoked in him stealing over his brain, the gentleness with which he had always met her optimism as if afraid to mar its surface.

"We're at Rye for the summer. Pete had to come East on business—you know of course I'm Mrs. Peter Hagerty now; so we brought the children and took a house. You've got to come out and see us."

"Can I?" he asked directly. "When?"

"When you like—here's Pete." The revolving door functioned, giving up a fine, tall man of thirty, with a tanned face and a dark mustache. His immaculate fitness made a sharp contrast with Anson's increasing bulk, which was obvious under the faintly tight cutaway coat.

"You oughtn't to be standing," said Hagerty to his wife. "Let's sit here." He indicated some lobby chairs, but Paula hesitated.

"I've got to get right home," she said. "Anson, why don't you—why don't you

come out and have dinner with us tonight? We're just getting settled, but if you can stand that—"

Hagerty confirmed the invitation cordially.

"Come out for the night."

Their car waited in front of the hotel, and Paula with a tired gesture sank back against silk cushions in the corner.

"There's so much I want to talk to you about," she said, "it seems hopeless."

"I want to hear about you."

"Well—" She smiled at Hagerty. "That would take a long time too. I have three children—by my first marriage; the oldest is five, then four, then three." She smiled again. "I didn't waste much time having them, did I?"

"Boys?"

"A boy and two girls. Then—oh, a lot of things happened, and I got a divorce in Paris a year ago, and married Pete. That's all—except that I'm awfully happy."

In Rye they drove up to a large house near the Beach Club, from which there issued presently three dark, slim children who broke from an English governess and approached them with an ecstatic cry. Abstractedly and with difficulty Paula took them each in turn into her arms. Even against their fresh faces Paula's skin showed scarcely any loss—for all her physical languor, she seemed younger than when he had last seen her at Palm Beach seven years ago.

At dinner she seemed preoccupied, and afterward during the session of the eternal radio, she lay with closed eyes on the sofa until Anson wondered if his presence at this time were not an intrusion. But at nine o'clock, when Hagerty rose and said pleasantly that he was going to leave them by themselves for an hour, she began to talk slowly about the past.

"My first baby," she said, "the one we call Darling, the biggest little girl—I wanted to die when I knew I was going to have her, because Lowell was like a stranger to me—it didn't seem as though she could be my own. I wrote you a letter and tore it up. Oh, you were so bad to me, Anson."

It was the dialogue again, rising and falling. Anson felt a sudden quickening of memory.

"Weren't you engaged once," she asked, "a girl named Dolly something?"

"I wasn't ever engaged. I tried to be engaged, but I never loved anybody but you, Paula."

"Oh," she said. Then after a moment: "The baby that's coming is the first one I ever really wanted. You—see, I'm in love now, at last."

He didn't answer, shocked at the treachery of remembrance. She must have seen that the words bruised him, for she continued:

"I was infatuated with you, Anson—you could make me do anything you liked. But we wouldn't have been happy. I'm not smart enough for you. I don't like things to be complicated as you do." She paused. "You'll never settle down," she said.

The phrase struck at him from behind—it was an accusation that of all accusations he had never merited.

"I could settle down if women were different," he said. "If I didn't understand so much about them, if women didn't spoil you for other women, if they had only a little pride, if I could go to sleep for a while and wake up into a home that was really mine! Why—why, that's what I'm made for, Paula; that's what women have seen in me and liked in me. It's only the bridge between that's worn away—"

Hagerty came in a little after ten; after a nightcap, Paula stood up and announced that she was going to bed. She went over and stood by her husband.

"Where did you go, dearest?" she demanded.

"I had a drink with Ed Saunders."

"I was worried. I thought maybe you'd run away."

She rested her head against his necktie. "He's sweet, isn't he, Anson?" she said. "Absolutely," said Anson, laughing. She raised her face to her husband. "Well, I'm ready," she said. She turned to Anson. "Do you want to see something?"

"Yes," he said in an interested voice. "All right—go!"

Hagerty picked her up easily in his arms. "This is called the family acrobatic stunt," said Paula. "Every night he carries me upstairs. Isn't that nice of him?"

"Yes," said Anson. "That's because he loves me truly—isn't it, you?"

Hagerty bent his head slightly until his face touched her own.

"And I love him too—I've just been telling you, haven't I, Anson?"

"Yes," he said.

"He's the sweetest thing that ever lived in this world, aren't you, darling? . . . Well, good night. Here we go. Isn't he strong?"

"Yes," Anson said.

"Sweet dreams. You'll find a pair of Pete's pajamas laid out for you. Sweet dreams—see you at breakfast."

"Yes," Anson said.

THE older members of the firm insisted that Anson should go abroad for the summer. He had scarcely had a vacation in seven years, they said. He was stale and needed a change. Anson resisted.

"If I go," he declared, "I won't come back any more."

"That's absurd, old man. You'll be back in three months with all this depression gone. Fit as ever."

"No." He shook his head stubbornly. "If I stop, I won't go back to work. If I stop, that means I've given up—I'm through."

"We'll take a chance on that. Stay six months if you like. We're not afraid you'll leave us. Why, you'd be miserable if you didn't work."

They arranged his passage for him. They liked Anson,—everyone liked Anson,—and the change that had been coming over him cast a sort of pall over the office. The enthusiasm that had invariably speeded up business, the consideration toward his equals and his inferiors, the lift of his vital presence—his intense nervousness had melted down these qualities into the fussy pessimism of a man of forty. Once he had buoyed up the people around him—now on every transaction in which he was involved he acted as a drag and a strain.

"If I go, I'll never come back," he said.

Three days before he sailed, Paula died in childbirth. I was with him a great deal then, for we were crossing together, but for the first time in our friendship he told me not a word of how he felt; nor did I see the slightest sign of emotion. His chief preoccupation was with the fact that he was thirty years old—he would turn the conversation to the point where he could remind you of it and then fall silent, as if he assumed that the statement would start a chain of thought sufficient to itself. Like his partners, I was amazed at the change in him, and I was glad when the *Paris* moved off into the wet space between the works, leaving his principality behind.

"How about a drink?" he suggested.

He walked into the bar with that faintly defiant feeling that characterizes the first day out, and ordered four Martini cocktails. After the first one, a change came over him—he reached over suddenly and slapped my knee with the first joviality I had seen him exhibit for months.

"Did you see that girl in the red tam?" he demanded. "The one with the high

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color who had the two police dogs down here to bid her good-by."

"She's pretty," I said.

"I looked her up in the purser's office and found out that she's alone. I'm going down to see the steward in a few minutes. We'll have dinner with her tonight."

After a while he left me, and within an hour he was walking up and down the deck with her, talking to her in his strong, clear voice. Her red tam was a bright spot of color against the steel-green sea, and from time to time she looked up from under it and smiled with amusement, with interest, with anticipation. At dinner we had champagne and were very gay—afterward Anson ran the pool with infectious gusto, and several people who had seen me with him asked me his name. He and the girl were talking and laughing together on a lounge in the bar when I went to bed.

I saw less of him on the trip than I had hoped. He wanted to arrange a foursome, but there was no one available, so I saw him only at meals. Sometimes, though, he would have a cocktail in the bar, and he told me about the girl in the red tam and his adventures with her, making them all bizarre and amusing, as he had a way of doing; and I was glad that he was himself again, or at least the self that I knew and with which I felt at home. I don't think he was ever happy unless some one was in love with him, responding to him like filings to a magnet, helping him to explain himself, promising him something. What it was I do not know. Perhaps they promised that there would always be women in the world who would spend their brightest, freshest, rarest hours to nurse and protect that superiority that he cherished in his heart.

UNTIL CLOSING

(Continued from page 84)

"Herr Koenig is in the other room. He asks to be excused from coming in to meet his guests."

Mrs. Irwin's cloying fixed smile faded, and she started to speak; but again Alys' strong fingers found that soft, sensitive back through its upholstery of fur, and the words died on her faintly tinted lips.

"The master will listen in the bedchamber. The door is open a little," went on the accompanist. "This is one of his favorite encores. He used it night before last in Louisville. I know he will be delighted when he hears Mr. Le Brun's attack. Shall we begin?"

"I'm sure he is very kind," Mrs. Grater put in, feeling the situation caused by Herr Koenig's refusal to appear needed some easing comment.

"He has done more for you than I ever knew him to do for other admirers while on tour; but of course, we realize what you are doing for us before the art-loving public of Jonesville."

MR. KRAUS gave Mrs. Grater a full smile. He thought he now had a fair chance of getting the Jonesville bookings for next season if he should open his own office. The Jonesville engagements might have their little drawbacks, but they were money in the bank for the fortunate agency that could control them.

Armand fixed his violin firmly under his chin and turned slightly so that he could be sure that Alys would have the full benefit of his platform profile. She had erased from his mind his image of Gloria Swanson, Corinne Griffith and Barbara La Marr in one person, and he was as intent upon dramatizing his great moment for this little bit of fluff as he ever expected to be with his composite inspiration in his audience. After he should impress Fritz Koenig with his bowing, his legato and his double-stopping, after the master had rushed from his bedroom hiding-place to kiss him on both cheeks and predict for him a dazzling future, he would be able to ask Alys to go with him to share the high places of the earth.

The next step, a debut in New York, would be easy. Herr Koenig probably would arrange that himself. By this time next year, thought Armand, the critics would be proclaiming: "At last, an American violinist!"

And so, to Mr. Kraus' delicate yet authoritative accompaniment, he bowed his way into the berceuse that had brought tears to the eyes of so many thousands in the New Paradise motion-picture theater. As he played, he noticed that Mr. Kraus bent much nearer the keyboard than Noodles Simpson ever did—much nearer than was necessary.

As he passed the end of the third bar, Ar-

mand was startled by a sound. It was more than that. It was a bang, almost a crash. Somebody had closed the bedroom door definitely and emphatically. To tell the truth, the door had been slammed.

Mr. Kraus threw up his hands.

"I am sorry. It is no use going on. The master is not able to hear you further. Of course, you must remember he is not a critic, merely an artist. His inability to hear you through does not necessarily imply, shall we say, lack of merit. But if he is to play for his people tonight, he must not be out of humor."

Armand stood irresolute, his violin and bow drooping against his knees.

"Why did he slam the door?" he asked.

"It was a signal."

"But why did he slam it—so hard?"

Mr. Kraus shrugged. "There is no explaining the master. He closed it hard probably because he felt that way."

Grover quacked from his seat on the radiator:

"He slammed it like Father does when I play 'The Pal that I Loved' on my sax."

Mrs. Grater and Mrs. Irwin were standing and fussing with the collars of their fur coats to cover their lack of speech for such an emergency. As Armand laid his violin in the case, Alys started toward him, then thought better of it and began the work of getting her mother into the hall. As the group moved along the corridor toward the elevators, leaving Mr. Kraus standing smiling politely and uncertainly in the doorway, she edged to Armand's side.

"Tough luck!" she whispered.

"I've got to get down to the Olympian Room," he muttered. "It's almost time for the dinner concert."

They lagged behind the others for a moment.

"I better say good-by to you here," he went on. "You can't be playing around with a jazz fiddler."

Alys stopped and faced him. She bit her lip, and her eyes were blazing.

"That's what you were when I sent Grover to bring you around!" she said fiercely. Before he grasped what she meant by that, she had run ahead and disappeared into the elevator after her mother. The car gate crashed into place, and the group sank out of sight, leaving Armand standing in the corridor, his violin-case under his arm, a study in dejection.

FROM nine o'clock on, in the Norse Room that night, Armand played fox-trots mechanically, going through the familiar motions of his job without feeling. Noodles and the rest of the Jazzaters, lounging in the hotel lobby between numbers, talked their leader over as they smoked their cig-

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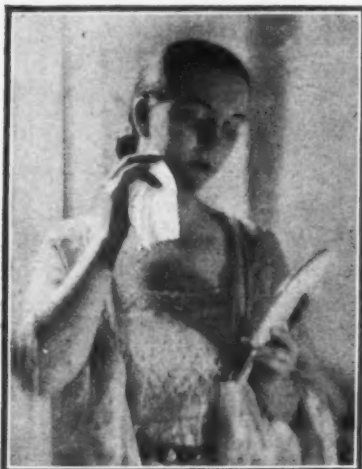
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arettes, wondering just what had come over him.

"Acts to me as if he'd been kicked by a white mule," was the diagnosis of the traps. Noodles contradicted that. His own belief and fear was that the young director was developing a temperament. Noodles did not believe in temperaments.

"You can't fool with this Russian music so much," he told the traps and the trombone. "This Rimsky fellow, and Stravinsky—playing them'll make a fellow like Le Brun cuckoo quick."

They had no way of knowing that Armand, as he played that evening for the dancers, was listening to the door of a hotel bedroom slam on his hopes for a concert career and the dreams he had been weaving around the figure of Alys Irwin. Armand was just beginning to understand what Herr Koenig's unusual action really meant as a comment on his tone and his technique.

HE had been a fool, of course, for picturing himself carrying Alys away from her circle of flat-haired youths, fellows who belonged. He was down to earth now, for the first time since he had dropped off the interurban from Nappanee and had ceased to be a Smalley. As his eye lighted on his assumed name in gold letters across the head of the bass drum, he had to restrain an impulse to put his foot through the membrane.

Alys, of course, was off him for life now. Evidently she had been playing him for higher things to be made possible through a career on the platform. That, certainly, was her reason for arranging the hearing by Herr Koenig. That she had not appeared tonight with Grover to dance was the added, the conclusive touch.

His weary eyes sought the face of his white-gold wrist watch and found it was eleven-thirty. Two more fox-trots, and he could close up and ride out on the midnight street-car to his furnished room. Noodles and the rest were still loafing in the lobby, so Armand racked the music for the next number, choosing an arrangement he had made himself of "The March of the Gnomes." He liked the piece partly for itself and partly because he had altered it himself for his dance band so successfully that the *Banner* had remarked it was better than "The March of the Wooden Soldiers;" and in Jonesville there could be no higher compliment. Something about playing it now seemed to soothe his raw spirit; and when his fellows had returned, he led into it with his old verve. Noodles looked around at the saxophone and winked slowly. In a moment Armand saw, by reading the broad smile on the face of the banjoist, that the tone they were getting was unusually fine, so he swung around to watch the effect on the dancers.

As he turned, he caught sight of Alys, being led in gloomy but faultless form by the faithful Grover. Her face was grave, and she did not look in the direction of the band. Armand, avoiding a possible contact with her eyes as she and her brother made the turn at his end of the room, was glad he had chosen the "Gnomes." He would play himself out with a flourish, anyhow.

A knot of listeners had stopped at the entrance of the Norse Room, filling the space. Whenever his orchestra drew these extra admirers, Armand always took the compliment personally; so he put the Jazzateers through the "Gnomes" again before he dropped his instrument. Then he pretended to be busy with Noodles, to avoid meeting the eyes of Alys and to impress the onlookers with his importance. He refused to give the encore demanded by the clapping. There were times to refuse, and this was one of them.

So successfully did he pretend to be engaged in conversation with Noodles that he did not hear the men who had come up behind him until one of them spoke his

name in a strangely familiar tone. He turned with a look of dumb astonishment, to be confronted by Mr. Kraus, carrying a violin-case and a traveling bag. Behind the accompanist stood a tall, foreign-looking man of military bearing in faultless evening clothes, and carrying over his arm a rich fur coat. Mr. Kraus spoke:

"Herr Koenig was passing through the hotel on his way back from his recital and heard you play that last number. He wishes to congratulate you upon your skill as a dance orchestra leader. He says you comprehend American dance-rhythms and ought to become famous in this country."

Here the master himself stepped forward and stood before the astounded Armand, who had wilted against the broad back of Noodles Simpson.

"You have a gift for just this sort of thing," Herr Koenig said gravely. "You ought to—what do you call it?—capitalize your chance. I have been reading about a leader named Lopez being—what do they say in America?—incorporated. It should be your opportunity. I have never heard better in America."

Before Armand le Brun could comprehend fully what was taking place, Herr Koenig had grasped his limp hand warmly, had wheeled, and was walking majestically toward the door. As Mr. Kraus turned to follow his chief, he said to Armand in a low voice:

"I'm going into the musical-bureau business; better let me help you get started if you decide to spread out. I know the game."

WHEN the visitors had disappeared, Armand let his bewildered gaze roam the Norse Room. When his eyes lighted on Alys, standing among the others with Grover, waiting for the last fox-trot, they focused for a moment on her pale, flower-like face. While he looked, he came to attention, straightening his shoulders and assuming something like the military air worn so becomingly by Herr Koenig. He spoke to Noodles, and his voice was the voice of authority:

"Put on 'Rose-Marie' for the finale. I'm going to dance this one myself."

A moment later Grover was wandering out into the lobby by himself, and Alys and Armand were covering the circumference of the Norse Room to the melody played by the leaderless Jazzateers. Armand, at the judicious moment, revolved the girl into an alcove where they were partly hidden, and there released her. They stood facing each other, and the eyes of both were eager and expectant. Armand spoke first:

"You saw Koenig stop and talk to me a minute ago? He says I ought to do like Lopez and Whiteman, and capitalize my talent."

He hung his head, for he did not like to make the inevitable admission.

"He says I ought to be famous some day, if I stick to what I can do."

The little bit of fluff came close to him and raised his head with a gesture of affection.

"I have lots of confidence in Herr Koenig's opinions," she said. "I wanted you to play your deep stuff for him so—"

She put her hands over his as they stood there, and again she permitted her eyes to do what Nature had intended.

"So what?" asked the boy.

"So you'd find out," she answered, and her voice was almost inaudible. "I knew we couldn't be happy till you knew."

He looked into her upturned face, and what he found there seemed to answer all his questions. He started to take her into his arms, but Alys pushed him gently toward the dance floor.

"Come on; let's finish 'Rose-Marie,'" she murmured. "It's only a couple of minutes until closing."



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T I D E S

stood it. They did more work than ten women'll do today and had three times as many children."

"They were different," said Holden, "and so were the men. Take Zenas Wheelock. When he was nine or ten years old he went to the Baltic in a sailing ship—his people were sea-captains—and at sixteen he left home, journeyed by stage to Montreal, apprenticed himself to Astor's fur company for five years and was sent to Mackinac with a lot of French-Canadian trappers. Took them three months in canoes and open boats. And he was just turned seventeen when they sent him into the wilderness with a party that spent the winter trading with the Indians."

"Adventurous," said Shire.

"Partly that and partly because his family'd lost money. The British got some of their ships in the War of 1812 and they had a string of bad luck afterwards, so off he went. When he first saw Chicago, it was nothing but a fort and a few log cabins; he landed from a canoe on the lake shore not half a mile from where his house is now."

"Lord," exclaimed Shire, "what an elegant chance those early settlers had to make money out of real-estate!"

"They were pretty busy keeping their scalps on their heads," Holden answered. "Zenas Wheelock came near getting killed by Indians half a dozen times. Didn't have much money for real-estate or anything else; the fur company paid him a hundred and twenty dollars a year and he sent a good part of that back to his folks. Later on, though, when the town began to grow, he did well; he was a rich man in 'seventy-one, but he held stock in insurance companies and sold most of his property to pay up losses after the Fire. Owned a fine brick block in Lake Street, but it burned, and he sold the land for what he could get, so now he hasn't any property except his home out here and a house and some lots downtown in Napier Place."

"**N**APIER PLACE?" repeated Shire incredulously, staring at Holden.

"Yes; big brick house, Number Twelve, with vacant lots on both sides." And as if in answer to the real-estate man's astonishment, he went on: "It's a funny thing to think of now, but the Wheelocks used to live there. Just imagine—three doors from Josie's place! The vacant lots used to be their grounds."

"My God," ejaculated Shire, "how the city's changed!"

"You bet it has! Abraham Lincoln used to visit in that house. Zenas Wheelock bought the land when it was prairie, back in the middle 'thirties, so he's seen it change three times—from prairie to residence property, from residence property to a business district, and from that to"—he shrugged—"what it is now."

"I'm not my brother's keeper, or anything like that," announced Shire piously, "but I tell you, Holden, I wouldn't own property of that kind no matter how well it paid."

"That's the trouble," said Holden. "It doesn't pay—not the way he runs it. He rents to a respectable old woman who keeps roomers—when she can get them."

"That's the doggonedest nonsense I ever heard tell of," declared the real-estate man. "If a person's willing to own such property, what's the sense in throwing away the revenue? Oh, I don't mean women. There's other ways of making it pay. But if he's so blame particular, why doesn't he just get rid of it? We could get him a good price."

"Not with the restrictions he'd insist on."

"Good Lord," exclaimed Shire, "doesn't he ever sell any land without restrictions? First it's your garden and now it's this downtown place."

(Continued from page 37)

"Oh," said Holden, "it's just a sort of understanding about the garden, that's all."

"Nothing in writing?"

"No."

"That's good," said Shire with an approving nod. "The trouble with things like that is that conditions change so. An agreement that might have been all right a few years ago could be all wrong if the neighborhood built up. He'd probably see that, wouldn't he?"

"I don't know."

"Cranky?"

"No, I wouldn't say that. Pretty set in his notions, though."

"There aren't many of those old-timers left any more, are there?" said Shire reflectively. "I'd like to meet him, Holden. It must be interesting if you can get him telling what the town was like long ago. Maybe I could talk to him about his Napier Place property, too. If I could straighten him out on that, and make him some money maybe, it would be a good job all round."

"Yes," said Holden, "but—" He shook his head doubtfully.

"Couldn't we drop in on him this afternoon?" persisted Shire.

"Why, yes, if you want to," replied Holden, indifferently.

From Grand Boulevard they had turned east, and now, having driven several blocks in that direction, they reached an irregular open space formed by the junction of five highways.

"The Corners," said Holden, "our local shopping district."

SHIRE brought his horse to a walk and looked about. Cottage Grove Avenue, widening at this point, was lined on either side with frame buildings two or three stories high, some of them exhibiting false fronts, all of them weathered to a uniform grayness, their ground floors given over to shops, while those above were occupied as tenements, or as small offices in the windows of which were displayed the signs of lawyers, dentists and dressmakers. In the center of the widened avenue a Hyde Park dummy, looking like a shed on wheels, stood waiting with its trailer; beside it the cable road from downtown had its terminus, and a powerful horse was at that moment towing a heavy "grip-car" from the southbound to the northbound track. At the junction of Oakwood Boulevard and Drexel passengers were taking seats in a lumbering park phaeton which, drawn by a pair of sturdy grays, was about to start upon its leisurely journey toward Washington Park.

Beyond the open space, at the corner of Oakwood Avenue, rose a large frame building, unpainted, manifestly a temporary structure.

"The Republican Wigwag," Holden remarked coldly. "They're playing 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' in there twice a day. You'd think the Civil War wasn't over yet."

The afternoon performance was evidently about to begin, for a crowd composed chiefly of women and children was moving in the direction of the building as the two drove by.

Having traversed the crossroads, Shire tightened the reins and spoke to the mare, and they were proceeding at a good gait toward the lake when, suddenly, on sight of two ladies accompanied by a little boy and a little girl, Holden called upon him to draw up.

"Oh, Nannie!" he cried, beckoning.

As the runabout stopped, the ladies, followed by the children, came over to the curb and Shire was introduced to Mrs. Holden and Miss Wheelock.

"And this is my daughter Blanche," said Holden, "and Alan, Harris Wheelock's son."

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"Pleased to meet you, ladies," said Shire, lifting the unseasonable derby. Taking advantage of the opportunity, he again applied the silk handkerchief to his forehead. "I don't know how you womenfolks can keep yourselves looking so fresh and cool this weather." His eyes rested upon them approvingly as he returned the handkerchief, now mostly cohesive, to his pocket.

And indeed Mrs. Holden, delicately pretty in a gown of thin nun's-veiling, and Miss Wheelock in pearly-gray summer cashmere, did, as Shire declared, somehow achieve a look of pleasing coolness, although the costume of the period, with its tight-fitting bodice, its bustle, its voluminous skirts, and above all its rigid compression of the figure into exaggerated curves—curves corresponding with the productions of the turning-lathe then architecturally so popular—was not of a kind to suggest comfort in Chicago's stifling August.

"Where you going?" Holden asked his wife.

"We're taking Blanche and Alan to see 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' at the Wigwam."

"The Wigwam?" He frowned.

"I don't suppose it will be well played," she said, "but the children—"

"That's not the point," Holden broke in. "It's being played to keep the memory of slavery alive among the voters. It's politics. I don't want you to go to that place."

She looked down at the grass, then at Miss Wheelock, while the two children stared up at Holden helplessly.

"Well, Martha—" Mrs. Holden's tone was submissive and her step aimless as she returned to the sidewalk.

"I'm afraid it's my fault, Luke," said Miss Wheelock, moving briskly forward. "The political side of it never occurred to me, so it could hardly affect the children. They're only ten and eleven, remember. I thought they ought to see the play because it's made history."

HER tone and manner were entirely amiable, yet there was about her a directness, a precision, which marked her as a person who knew her own mind and could upon occasion take her own part. Having spoken, she kept her blue eyes fixed on Holden's face, and Shire, though he was not in the habit of considering points of character save as they might affect his business, noticed that they gleamed, and told himself that it would be difficult to find two women less alike; for Mrs. Holden's dark eyes looked as if her thoughts were far away, and her voice, deep and slow, suggested a corresponding slowness in decision. But for Holden's statement that the two had been schoolmates, he would have supposed Miss Wheelock considerably the elder; she looked thirty, whereas Mrs. Holden appeared almost too young to be the mother of Blanche, the delicately pretty little girl so much resembling her, who, with an automatic gesture, half dependent, half protective, now reached up and took her hand.

A faint, ironical smile appeared on Holden's lips as he replied to Martha Wheelock.

"I don't quite understand you, I'm afraid," he said. "You say it's a play that has made history, but that the political side of it never occurred to you."

"I meant I hadn't thought of its having any present political significance," she answered placidly.

"Well, it has," he insisted. "They're waving the bloody shirt in hopes of winning the election."

"Slavery did exist, though," she said, "and it seems to me that the children, considering their ages—"

"You can take Alan where you like," he broke in. "I'm talking about my daughter—and my wife."

Her eyes remained for a moment on his face, but when she spoke it was to Alan.

"We wont go today," she said.
The boy glanced up at her but did not reply.

"Oh no, Martha," Mrs. Holden quickly protested, "you must take him just the same. Please!"

"Some other day."

"But Blanche and I will feel that we've cheated him out of it."

"You needn't. It doesn't particularly matter when we go."

Mrs. Holden glanced at Alan, who was staring at a crack between the boards of the sidewalk.

"He's so disappointed," she pleaded, but Miss Wheelock was firm.

"We started to take the children out together, Nannie," she replied, "and I think we should continue together. I'm sure Alan thinks so too." She looked to him for confirmation, but he still stared ruminatively at the crack and did not answer, so she continued:

"There are plenty of things we can do. Let's go to Hubbard's first and get some soda-water. Then, if—"

"Strawberry!" cried Blanche with sudden animation, but even the mention of soda-water failed to draw a response from Alan, who had begun to kick idly at one of the boards.

"Whew!" breathed the baking Shire, and Holden took the hint.

"Well, we'll be moving on," he said, whereat Shire promptly started up the mare.

Chapter Two

AS the runabout drove off, Alan Wheelock stood motionless, following it with his eyes. Meanwhile the ladies and the little girl had begun to walk toward the Corners, but when they had proceeded a short distance, Miss Wheelock turned and called to her nephew.

Slowly he began to follow them.

"Usually he takes disappointments pretty well," the aunt said in a low tone to Mrs. Holden. "It's better not to notice."

"Perhaps it's the heat," suggested the other.

"Yes, I'm sure he'll be all right when he gets his soda-water."

To avoid taking the children past the entrance to the Wigwam, they started diagonally across the street, but Blanche, catching sight of the colored posters at both sides of the door, seized her mother's hand and drew her toward them. One picture showed *Simon Legree* lashing *Uncle Tom* with a snake-whip, while the other depicted *Eliza* crossing the ice; and as Alan came up, Blanche was voluble with questions. "Why's she doing it? Why are the dogs chasing her? Did she get across?"

"Come along, dear," urged the uneasy mother. "It's a very sad play. Smell that nice popcorn! Um-m! Come, we'll get some." But as she was led toward the popcorn stand, at the curb, Blanche's head was turned and her inquiries continued.

"What's he hitting the old colored man for?"

"You heard what Father said, dear. He doesn't want you to see the play."

"Who are the men on the shore with dogs?"

Mrs. Holden was, however, engaged in the hurried purchase of a bag of buttered popcorn, and it was Alan who replied.

"Democrats," he declared darkly.

"I don't believe it!" cried Blanche.

"Are they, Mamma?"

"Are they what?"

"Democrats."

"Who?"

At this juncture, however, a brass band inside the building struck up with a violence evidently calculated to overcome a shortage of instruments, and as Mrs. Holden and Miss Wheelock shepherd their charges



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across the street and down Cottage Grove Avenue, they were pursued by the strains of a medley in which might be recognized fragments of such popular songs as, "Over the Garden Wall," "Paddy Duffy's Cart," "Wait Till the Clouds Roll By, Jennie," "Wheel the Baby Out," and "Only a Pansy Blossom."

Contrary to Miss Wheelock's expectation, chocolate soda-water, usually so efficacious, did not work a cure with Alan, who, while further plans for the afternoon were discussed by his Aunt Martha and his Aunt Nannie—as he always called Mrs. Holden—plodded through his glassful in silence.

"We could take a park phaeton and go out to the menagerie at Washington Park," Miss Wheelock suggested.

"The park'll be so hot," said Blanche.

"How would you like to go down to the lake shore and paddle in the water?"

The idea appealed to Blanche, and they set out, retracing their steps on Oakwood Avenue, which led them to the suburban railway station, built of sanded boards, at the foot of the street, where they crossed the tracks and descended to the strip of beach behind the breakwater. Here, while Blanche waded, and Alan dug aimlessly in the sand, or idly skipped flat stones across the water, the two ladies sat basking in the sun until Mrs. Holden, unable longer to endure the heat, admitted that she had a headache, whereupon they all started home.

THEY had not far to go. The avenue on which they lived, but a block distant, paralleled the shore of the lake, the grounds on its eastward side running back to the stone wall marking the boundary of the railroad. On the corner were two vacant lots almost large enough to be called fields, the one nearer the lake a forest of tall weeds, turning from green to a dry brown, while in the other two Jersey cows, grazing at the ends of ropes, paused occasionally to fix ruminative eyes on children running and shrieking as they played a game known locally by the cryptic name of "sting-gool."

Catching sight of Alan and Blanche, the players hailed them, and Miss Wheelock, who had planned the afternoon largely with a view to keeping her nephew and her god-daughter from running in the sun, was relieved when she heard Alan answer, "Aw, too hot," an opinion which Blanche immediately echoed.

Yet Miss Wheelock was disturbed at her nephew's unwonted indifference. His life, like the lives of the other children of the neighborhood, was largely spent in the vacant lots scattered up and down the avenue, fragments, as her father told Alan, of the ancient Illinois prairie, handed down to young suburban savages by earlier savages, the Indians, whose expulsion from these lands had begun eighty years ago, with the building of Fort Dearborn on the reed-grown bank of the Chicagou River.

What could be the matter with Alan, his aunt wondered. Why didn't he want to play? Was he ill? Earlier in the afternoon she had thought that he was sulking over his disappointment at their failure to see "Uncle Tom's Cabin," but it wasn't like him to sulk, and, watching him, she had begun to doubt that was it.

"I'll give him some rhubarb and soda tonight," she told herself.

But for once Martha Wheelock had failed to read the nephew she had brought up from babyhood and understood so well. Her diagnosis was incorrect. Alan's ailment was beyond the reach of childhood's remedies, for it was not an ailment of the body. He had not been thinking of the play at the Wigwam, nor, though he couldn't bear to talk, had he been sulking. Close as he felt to his Aunt Martha, he could not have explained to her, just then, what the

trouble was. He wished that he could tell her, for he was dimly aware that his actions, that afternoon, had misled her; but how could he explain to her these feelings which he did not understand himself?

With the disruption of the plan for the afternoon there had descended upon him a melancholy entirely disproportionate to the immediate cause; an unhappiness due not to that disruption, but to a revelation which had come to him, there in the hot street, informing him that this world which had seemed so perfect was not entirely a happy place. Suddenly, bewilderingly, he had realized it, not as a fact sharply defined, but as a feeling, like that of a shapeless presence in the dark, unseen but very real. And now that he sensed it there, he somehow knew that it had been there all the time.

Many things were wrong. Aunt Nannie Holden was unhappy—not just this afternoon, but always. Blanche was unhappy, too, though perhaps she didn't know it any more than he had known it a little while ago. Why were they unhappy? He thought he didn't know. But as, having passed the Holdens' house, he began to trail his fingers idly over the wooden pickets of his grandfather's fence, he saw, far up the street, a runabout, and recognized the weaving gait of the bay pacer.

Mr. Holden! It was something to do with him. He didn't like Mr. Holden. He had never liked him. That was why it was so hard to call him Uncle Luke. You just didn't feel like he was your uncle. You didn't want him for an uncle, the way you wanted Aunt Nannie for an aunt.

Having glanced back to where his Aunt Martha was bidding good-by to Blanche and her mother, he opened the gate and started toward the front door of the friendly gray-green house, but as there came to his ears from somewhere behind the house the sound of sawing, he changed his course and swung round past the side porch, with its screen of tall lilac bushes, past the grape-arbor, leading to the green-lattice summerhouse, and almost past the kitchen steps, where, however, scenting through the open windows the aroma of hot cookies, he paused, making a brief and satisfactory call upon the amiable Delia O'Shea; whereafter he proceeded on his way, and near the gate in the board fence marking the Holdens' boundary, found Jason steadying a ladder against one of the lindens.

High on the ladder his grandfather, wearing a flannel working shirt, was sawing at a limb.

Slowly munching his cookies, the boy stood in silence watching Zenas Wheelock ply his saw. Evidently he had been working at the other lindens, for a number of branches lay upon the ground, and Alan, aware of his grandfather's fondness for the trees, wondered at these operations and intended to ask about them when his cookies were disposed of.

Though the topmost branches of the lindens reached only a little way above the line of the flat roof, they were the tallest trees on the block, for Oakland—or Cleaversville as the district was originally called—had grown out of the shadeless prairie and its trees were no older than the houses whose proprietors had planted them.

The sole exception: to this rule were several ancient oaks in a vacant lot on the block to the southward of the Wheelocks', last survivors, Alan knew, of a grove cut down so long ago that no one in the neighborhood remembered it except his grandfather and Mr. Cleaver. Zenas Wheelock took special interest in these weathered veterans whose spreading branches were gnarled and twisted like the limbs of cripples. Sometimes, when Alan went with him for a walk, they would push their way through the tall weeds to where the trees stood, and the old man, resting his hand on the rough bark as

if on the shoulder of a comrade, would describe the grove as he first saw it when he and Dufour, the young French *voyageur* who taught him the Indian language, landed here after coming down the lake from Mackinac with the fur brigade.

ALAN had heard the story many times, but he never tired of it. It was not as exciting as some of his grandfather's other stories; there was no danger in it; but it made you see pictures of Oakland as it looked long ago, before there was any Oakland, and it was wonderful to think, as you listened, that you were standing right there where the edge of the grove used to be, and that where you now saw houses and fences and streets with carriages and wagons driving over them, there was nothing, then, but miles and miles of open prairie.

That was why his grandfather and Dufour came ashore here; Dufour had seen the prairie before and wanted Zenas Wheelock to see it. So they climbed a tree at the edge of the grove, and sat and looked for a long time—just a great open space as far as you could see, with grass and wildflowers moving like waves in the wind. Near by a herd of deer grazed, and five miles away a dot shimmering in the sun was Fort Dearborn. Of course they never dreamed, as they looked at the prairie, that either of them would live to see it turn into a city, and that one of them, in his old age, would build a house within arrow's-flight of where they sat.

Alan knew every detail of the story. The other *voyageurs* of the brigade went on, in their *bateaux* and canoes, toward the mouth of the river. They were to camp that night near Mr. Kinzie's house, the first house ever built where Chicago was to be, so pretty soon the two young men climbed down from the tree and walked toward the fort, following the Indiana Trail, over which refugees from the massacre had fled a few years before. There wasn't so much as a log cabin in the whole five miles, though they did pass some Indian tepees at a point which Zenas Wheelock thought would be where Twenty-second Street was now. Like the oak grove, the trail was now forgotten. Only Alan's grandfather and one or two of his old friends remembered it, but Alan knew that its course was marked now by the very avenue on which he lived, and the thought never ceased to fascinate him.

Nearly sixty years had passed since his grandfather and the young Frenchman took that walk together, but Alan had noticed that the old man frequently thought about Dufour. Some of his most exciting stories were of their adventures together, later, in the Illinois wilderness, and through these tales, on which he had been brought up, Alan had come to feel that he too knew the gay young *voyageur*.

Often when something particularly interested Zenas Wheelock his mind would turn back to his companion of long ago. "I wish Dufour could see that," he would say. Alan had heard him say it many times. He said it about the Cottage Grove Avenue cable line, and about the patent garden sprinkler with its whirling arms, and one night he said it as they sat on the porch and watched the lamp-lighter zigzag up the avenue, touching the street-lamps with his wandlike torch. But Dufour would never see any of these things, for while still young he was murdered by a drink-crazed Indian.

STILL wondering why his grandfather was cutting branches from the lindens of which he was so fond, Alan, engaged with his last cookie, was preparing to ask questions, when his aunt came rapidly around the corner of the house.

"Now, Father!" she exclaimed, looking up at him accusingly.

The old man stopped sawing, and with

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the back of a strong forearm wiped his brow.

"Well, Martha?"

"When it's so hot!" she protested.

"But I understood you to say you'd be away all afternoon."

"Well, I'm glad I came back," she retorted with as much severity as she could muster in face of such disarming candor.

The old man turned and beneath brows like a wintry hedge, glanced along the trees.

"We shall have more light in the dining-room," he declared with satisfaction.

"But why didn't you let Jason do it?"

"I felt the need of exercise," replied her father, and at the phrase, familiar on the old man's lips, the negro smiled.

"I'm sure you've had enough by now," Miss Wheelock said, "so please come down."

"This is the last branch," he answered, and vigorously resumed his sawing.

She waited until the severed branch fell, whereupon, steadying himself with one hand and carrying the saw in the other, he briskly descended the ladder.

TALL, broad-shouldered and deep-chested, Zenas Wheelock moved with an elasticity which, accustomed as she was to it, his daughter always found surprising. Save that his hair and beard had turned from gray to white, he seemed to have changed hardly at all within her memory. She knew that in his early manhood the Indians, whose pedestrian champions he defeated, had given him a name meaning "Swift Walker;" frequently he had covered forty or fifty miles on foot in a single day, swimming rivers as he came to them, whether in winter or in summer; and now that he was old, her emotions concerning his persistent physical activities were mixed, for she realized that it was difficult for one who had always been so energetic to make concessions to the encroaching years, and while she feared his resistance, she was proud of it.

There was nothing about him of which she was not proud. Had she attempted to catalogue his qualities, the first on her list would have been the conspicuously upright character which, almost as much as his connection with the city's earliest history, made him a conspicuous figure; she was proud too of his bodily strength, of his picturesque appearance, his height, his bearing, his patriarchal head with its mountainous features and snowy hair and beard, a head so distinguished that strangers would turn in the street to look at him; she was proud even of his faults; of that stubbornness which, in conjunction with his impatient honesty, drove him, against all advice, to sell valuable property at the bottom of a panic market, after the Chicago Fire, to clear himself of debt; she was proud of his gentle, half-humorous perverseness, his quixotic trust in anyone of whom he was fond, and his naive conviction that the Republican Party was the party of righteousness, and the Democratic Party the party of black destruction. The only thing of which she was not proud was that he chewed tobacco, and to that she did not greatly object, since he was very neat about it.

Jason took the saw from his employer's hand, leaned it against the fence, and began to collect the fallen boughs, and Zenas Wheelock, with his daughter marching at his side like an amiable but determined policeman, moved across the back yard on his way to the side porch.

"What you going to do now?" Alan asked the colored man.

"Oil ma harness."

That did not sound interesting, so Alan turned and skipped after his aunt and his grandfather. Coming up behind them as they neared the steps, he saw that his grandfather's light flannel working shirt was wet through the back. "You're awfully hot, Gran'pa," he remarked.

"Not so very," said the old man. "In fact, considering the weather, I'm quite cool."

Miss Wheelock shook her head in humorous resignation.

"Your grandfather wouldn't admit being too warm," she said, "any more than he'd admit being tired."

Zenas Wheelock had ascended the steps, and was moving across the porch toward the screen door, but at that he turned.

"Tired?" he repeated. "Why, Martha, I could whip my weight in wildcats."

Chapter Three

HAVING left the two ladies and the children, Shire and Holden drove to the avenue beside the lake, where they turned northward through the district in which stood the oldest houses of the neighborhood, some tall and square, with mansard roofs and high porches unrelieved by shrubbery, others low-gabled cottages with long eaves, like those of Swiss chalets, reaching down to meet the skyward branches of tall bushes.

Under the shaft of the Douglas monument Shire swung the mare into a cross street and after visiting other avenues, made his way to the southern extremity of the suburb, doggedly persistent in spite of his sufferings under the relentless sun, discussing with Holden, as he drove, property values, transportation, market tendencies; noting vacant lots, or lawns large enough to be dismembered, and occasionally calling the attention of his companion to a blue and yellow sign showing that the firm of W. J. Shire & Co. was already operating here.

The more important streets through which they passed were paved with cedar blocks and curbed in some cases with stone, in others with timber, and before each of the larger houses stood a hitching-post and a carriage-block, the latter, invariably of stone, presenting to the street initials or a family name carved in Roman letters, large and sepulchral.

"Now," said Holden as, having completed their survey, they headed back, "we'll stop at my house for a nice cool bottle of beer." Whereupon the good mare, as if kindly disposed toward her owner, extended herself and carried them swiftly to the block on which Holden lived.

Less built up than any other part of Oakland, this block nevertheless contained two of the largest houses they had seen, one of them a four-square pile of red brick surrounded by spacious grounds, the other of buff painted brick with a glass conservatory jutting from one side, and a spreading lawn embellished by a cast-iron fountain: a circular basin with a central pedestal surmounted by life-sized figures of two children standing under an umbrella over which water trickled with a pleasant sound into the pool below.

WHEN Holden mentioned the owners of these houses, Shire, recognizing the names as those of successful business men, brought his horse to a walk and gazed at the properties with respectful eyes.

"I guess Colonel Burchard and Mr. Dunham are both of them millionaires," he said.

"Yes, we claim we've got the only block around here with two millionaires on it."

"That's a right elegant fountain," continued Shire, still admiring the Burchard property.

"The more people have," said Holden philosophically, "the more they seem to want. The Burchards go away a lot. They're East at the seashore now; they've been to Europe a couple of times, and last winter they went to Florida—nobody sick, just pleasure."

"Looks like it was getting to be the

tendency of the times for people to go dashing about," Shire observed. "I know folks in this town that don't think any more of taking a trip to New York than they would of thought of going to Elgin or Rockford a few years back. Of course it's the railroads that have made Chicago what she is, but they seem to be bringing on an age of unrest. What with these modern fast trains and George M. Pullman's sleeping-cars, some people can't seem to be satisfied to stay where they belong." He flicked at a horsefly with his whip and after a moment's silence, continued:

"My daughter Florence got that way last summer. Nothing would do but her and her mother should pack up and go East. They liked Niagara Falls and Saratoga Springs all right, but at the seashore Florence didn't have such a good time as she expected. Those Easterners are pretty clannish; I guess they don't think much of us folks out here."

"I hardly think," said Holden, visioning Florence Shire's green eyes and her smile, "that your daughter would find herself left out wherever she might go."

"She's attractive all right," the father admitted. "I guess maybe that was the trouble. The women at this watering-place she went to mostly all knew each other and they weren't looking for competition when the men came from the cities Saturday and Sunday. Florence did get acquainted with some of the men, but the women acted mean."

"You see," he went on, "a lot of these Easterners owned cottages and went there year after year. Some of our wealthy families are beginning to do the same, I notice. There's quite a colony at Charlevoix, for instance, and at a couple of places in Wisconsin."

"Mr. Dunham's talking of building a summer residence at Lake Geneva," Holden remarked.

"That's another tendency of the times," said Shire. "Makes a man wonder where all the money comes from. I know of a house being built at Lake Geneva that's going to cost upward of nine thousand dollars. Three bathrooms—one of them just for the hired girls. I don't see what we're coming to if people get to pampering their help like that."

UPON coming abreast of Holden's house, which stood a little way beyond the Burchard place, on the other side of the street, facing the lake, the real-estate man turned his horse, drew up at the carriage block and eased himself slowly to the ground.

"That beer'll certainly go fine now," he sighed as he tied the mare to a cast-iron hitching-post surmounted by a horse's head in miniature.

The wide lot was bordered at the front by a fence made of round iron pickets of alternating height mounted on a stone coping. Holden opened the gate, and the two moved toward the house, which was of red brick and brown stone with a sharp gable and a pointed tower shingled in a geometrical design with red and blue slates, above which spikes of ornamental ironwork pointed toward the burning sky.

"Whew!" Shire exclaimed in relief as he entered a hall dimly lighted by a window of multi-colored leaded glass. "You certainly keep this place cool."

Holden moved to the foot of the stairs, which were of yellow oak with a heavy railing and a massive carved newel-post surmounted by the figure of a partially draped nymph in bronze holding aloft a gas-jet.

"Oh, Nannie!" he called upward, but it was Blanche who looked over the balustrade and answered.

"Sh-h, Pappa," she warned in a loud whisper. "Mamma's just come in with a headache. She's gone to lie down."

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"All right," replied her father, and without more ado he led Shire through the double sliding doors to the dining-room, where he invited him to sit down and make himself comfortable.

The real-estate man did not require to be urged. As his host disappeared through the pantry door he dropped into an armchair and unbuttoning his vest, looked about the room, which he found admirable.

Here, as in the hall, the woodwork and furniture were of yellow oak. A long side-board built into a shallow alcove met at either end the paneled wainscoting, above which the walls were covered with brown and gold imitation leather, hung with framed engravings of hunting dogs and game birds. Even the frames of these pictures were of oak, wide, flat and highly polished, with silver beading at the inner edge, and a final touch of elegance was contributed to the room by the chandelier depending from the ceiling over the center of the table, for it was of bronze and each of its eight branches, embellished with knobs, scrolls and strings of metal beads, terminated in a sphinx's head.

Through a screened window, open to the garden, wafted the fragrance of flowers accompanied by the faint droning of bees, and from farther off the rhythymical pull and thrust of a saw which, coming through the heat, suggested to Shire the sound of hard breathing. The thought of some one sawing out there in the sun gave him, as he sat in the comparative coolness of the dining-room, a sense of well-being which increased as he saw Holden emerge from the pantry carrying glasses and two dripping bottles on a tray.

A COOL mist formed on the tumblers as the host slowly poured the amber fluid, and the creamy collar was still settling at the top of his glass when he raised it to Shire, saying, "Drink hearty!"—a courtesy which the thirsty real-estate man returned by making with his own glass an economical gesture, and muttering something, presumably a toast, which was however drowned in the foam as hastily he lifted the beverage to his lips.

There was a moment's silence as they drank; then, "Ah-h!" they sighed together, lowering their glasses.

Holden had remained standing and now, instead of sitting down, he moved to the open window and looked out beneath the partly drawn shade.

"I thought so," he said, as if speaking to himself; and turning to Shire: "That's Zenas Wheelock thinning out branches in his trees."

"Good Lord, on a day like this! How old is he?"

"Seventy-four."
Shire sighed. "I'm only fifty-three," he said ruefully. "Wish I felt like that. Mrs. Shire and Florence are all the time telling me I ought to exercise."

Holden moved back to the table and sat down. "Nonsense," he replied, "I don't exercise and I always feel first rate. It's a habit, and like all habits it's hard to break. That's the trouble with him." He jerked his head in the direction from which the sound came. "When he was young he had to cut down trees to build cabins and clear the land, and now he's like an old beaver that doesn't know how to quit. He thinks he's sawing off those limbs to get more light in his house, but that's not it. It's just that he's always got to be doing something."

Shire, drinking, had kept his eyes on Holden.

"Darned if I don't hate to hear him!" he declared, setting down his glass; whereupon, as if in answer to his words, the sawing ceased.

Holden rose, moved again to the window and looked out.

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"Martha Wheelock's come to stop him," he said over his shoulder.

"Well, I should think so!" exclaimed Shire. "She looked like a woman of sense."

"Yes, she's got sense," admitted Holden grudgingly. "I was wondering what she'd do. She's pretty bossy about most things—too bossy to suit me—but I've got to give her credit for handling her father."

WHEN the sawing was resumed, Shire joined his host at the window, and the two watched until, upon the falling of the limb, the old man descended from the ladder and moved with his daughter toward the house, their heads and shoulders visible above the top of the board fence.

"We'll give him time to get cleaned up before we call," said Holden, moving over to the table; and as Shire bent his head back, draining his glass, he continued: "In the meantime how would another bottle set?"

"Why, fine," replied his guest, and as Holden's bottle was only half empty, the fresh one which he now brought from the icebox went entirely to Shire.

"I gorry, that's fine beer!" he exclaimed after taking a deep draught, and though Holden assured him that it was merely the regular product of a local brewery, the other protested, between gulps, that the beer was exceptional, that he had never tasted better, that this was the beer he should henceforth buy for his own household.

"Beer's my steady drink," he declared, as he poured the last of the bottle into his glass. "Ruby, my wife, came from St. Louis. A great beer town. Germans. Raised on beer." Again he threw his head back, and when he set the glass down it was empty. "She'd tell you, like I do, that's fine stuff you got."

"Have another bottle," invited Holden.

"Well, I might," assented Shire after a momentary show of hesitation, and again, with the third bottle, he eulogized the beverage.

"I was doing pretty good in a business way when I married," he told Holden between draughts. "Salesman. Used to drive all over Southern Illinois; knew every mud-hole; but o' course I was nothing like as well off as I am now. Like wine. Holden? Plenty at my house—claret, Rhine wine, champagne, anything you'd ask for. I tell Ruby she could take a bath in champagne if she wanted to, the way we're fixed now." He laughed. "She'd look mighty pretty in a bathtub full of champagne—got a skin like a baby. Maybe you noticed Flo's skin? Gets it from the old woman—aint hard to see she didn't get it from me!" Evidently the idea struck him as exceedingly droll, for he shook with mirth, and tears streamed from his eyes.

"What was I saying? Oh, yes—beer. Ruby says to me, she says, 'We'll have the best of wines to set before our friends, but for me,' she says, 'give me good old beer every time.'" He drank, and gazing at his glass with profound solemnity, continued:

"Like I was telling you about buckboards, Florence she don't care much for beer. Tendency of the age. Prefers champagne, but don't get much, you bet, 'cause Ruby brings her up sensible. 'You're a beautiful girl, Flo,' she tells her; 'you got a beautiful form and a skin like a baby, but you're only nineteen and don't you go making no fool of yourself drinking champagne,' she says. 'You stick to beer,' she says, 'like I do, moderate, and it aint going to hurt your looks or your morals either. The proof of the pudding's the eating,' she says. 'Look at me—past forty.' And," continued the admiring husband and father, "it's a fact, if I do say it myself, Ruby's as fine a looking woman of her age as you'd want to see. I'd like for you to meet her, Holden."

"I certainly hope to."



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SHIRE, drinking the last of his beer, fixed his red-brown eye on Holden over the rim of his glass, and stared at him as if to hold his attention until, having finished, he set the glass upon the table.

"Fact is, Holden," he continued in a confidential tone, "I'm thinking pretty serious about buying one of these lots out here and building me a house."

"Fine!"

"And if I do put up a house," he continued impressively, "people around here'll see that W. J. Shire aint a man that does things by halves. She'll be a daisy, let me tell you. Burchard or Dunham or nobody'll have a better house." He nodded gravely. "Me and my family will want to take our proper place in the neighborhood, of course," he went on. "We'll want to get acquainted with the Burchards and Dunhams and Wheelocks—the whole kit and caboodle." Still looking his host in the eye he belched loudly but with a certain dignity, whereafter he placed his hands on the arms of the oak chair and lifted himself to his feet.

"Well," he said, "I reckon it's time we was going next door."

Holden, however, had been watching his guest with narrowing eyes. In spite of Shire's vaunted cellars the three bottles of beer had plainly affected him.

"Don't you think perhaps we'd better put that call off until another time?" he suggested. "You'll be out here again, and—"

"Why would I put it off?" demanded Shire, drawing himself up haughtily. "Wasn't we sitting here waiting for the old man to get washed up? That's cert'nly what I thought we was sitting here for. If you mean I can't conduc' myself like a gentleman after a few glasses beer, why all I got to say is—"

There, however, Holden broke in with a denial.

"Nonsense," he exclaimed, rising and clapping Shire on the back with exaggerated good fellowship, "who said anything about beer? I was thinking of your long drive back, that's all."

"Oh," said Shire, mollified, "never mind that. With a mare like I got, that don't amount to anything. Two-forty on a plank road."

"Come on, then," said Holden, leading the way to a side door from which steps descended to the garden, and Shire, taking up his hat, followed.

"Fact is," he said as they moved toward the gate in the board fence, "I guess I was a little talkative in there with you, but that's among friends. Never worry 'bout me. Safe as church. You'll see."

AND indeed his manner as he spoke to Miss Wheelock, whom they found reading to her nephew on the side porch, was so punctilious that Holden felt reassured.

Alan was sent to find his grandfather and the three sat in rocking-chairs chatting until, accompanied by his grandson, the old gentleman appeared, his face shining and rosy from the bath.

"I recognize the name," he said affably, when Holden introduced Shire.

"I guess lots of people do," the other replied, as they shook hands. "My firm spent over twenty-two hundred dollars last year just on signs."

"Well, I hope we won't see any more of them around here," remarked the old man, as with a gesture he invited them to resume their seats.

"I'm afraid you'll be disappointed, then," put in Holden with his characteristic dry little smile. "I've been trying to interest Mr. Shire in Oakland property and he tells me he is favorably impressed."

"I'm sorry to hear it," returned Zenas Wheelock placidly, as he sat down.

"You don't mean to say, Mr. Wheelock," asked Shire incredulously, "that you'd be

sorry to see an active real-estate market out here and prices going up?"

"Yes, I should."

Perhaps impelled to do so by the look of stupefaction on the real-estate man's face, Miss Wheelock spoke.

"I think, Father," she said, "that Mr. Shire doesn't quite understand your attitude."

"Oh, I'm sure he does," answered her father.

"No sir," said Shire, "I'm blamed if I do! If this neighborhood booms, it's money in your pocket, so I don't—"

"If this neighborhood booms," put in the old man, "it means crowding. I've been crowded out of two neighborhoods already because real-estate firms became interested in them. I'd about as soon have a real-estate man interested in my residence property as have an Indian interested in my scalp."

"Why," protested Shire, "one of the surest signs of Chicago's greatness is the steady increase of real-estate values. The only places where values don't increase is dead towns. This city's growing, and it's going to keep on growing in spite of what anybody wants. The same thing that happened further downtown is what's going to happen here."

"That's what I moved out here to avoid, Mr. Shire."

Shire looked out over the expanse of side yard with its grape-arbor and summer-house, its fruit trees and its stable on the alley to the rear.

"Well," he said, "for the life of me I can't see what you got to worry about, no matter how much this neighborhood builds up—not with all this property you've got. Why, you could sell off a fair sized building-lot and still have plenty of room."

"I didn't buy to sell."

"I understand you sold off a strip at the other side of your house," Shire said, jerking his head in the direction of Holden's garden.

THE old man's lips parted as if he were about to speak but he closed them again and there was a moment's silence which was broken by Martha Wheelock, who rose, saying:

"If you'll excuse me a moment, I'll see about some cake and lemonade."

"None for me, thanks," said Holden.

"Nor me," echoed Shire; and with a wink at Holden he added: "My drink's beer."

"I am sorry we have no beer to offer you," Zenas Wheelock said.

"Oh, I didn't mean I wanted any. Fact is I just had some, and lemonade don't set good on top of beer." He chuckled. "I'll never forget once when a St. Louis fellow, an old flame of my wife's, come to our house, and Ruby gave him a couple of bottles of beer, not knowing—" But there his story was cut off by Zenas Wheelock.

"I won't have any lemonade either, thank you, Martha," he said with quiet emphasis; and turning to Shire, continued:

"My memory of transactions in Chicago real-estate reaches back to the great period of speculation that collapsed with the panic of 1837. The town went mad; it was like what happened later in the first mining camps out West. You'd be walking along the street and real-estate sharks would grab right ahold of your coat and try to drag you in. There was a colored man—Darky George, he was called—who used to get all dressed up and ride around on a horse announcing land sales. Great crowds would gather and property that sold for a hundred dollars one week might go for a several thousand the next. My friend Isaac Arnold was a young attorney then, and he took in as much as three thousand dollars in six days making out land titles.

"But," he went on, "mighty few Chicago

people made anything out of it, and many were ruined. The men who got the money were mostly rascals from outside." He shook his head. "No, Mr. Shire, I don't want to see any more booms. A boom's just the other end of a panic."

"Wasn't it about that time that you bought your downtown property?" asked Holden, but at this juncture the conversation was checked by the appearance of Harris Wheelock, who slowly pushed open the screen door and stood looking vaguely through his gold-rimmed eyeglasses at the group on the porch. Fairly tall, he was of spare build; his clothing hung loosely on him and his complexion was like wax into which the artificer has failed to put sufficient color.

When Holden introduced Shire, Harris muttered some words of welcome and offered a hand which, though it looked large, seemed to collapse in the other's grasp.

"Any news downtown?" Zenas Wheelock inquired of his son.

"No. Mighty hot." Harris ran a hand through his hair, which was turning from brown to gray and, in marked contrast to his father's brushlike white mane, was soft and fine.

"Did you bring the evening paper?" asked the old man.

"I think so," said Harris, dropping limply into a chair. "I was reading it on the train—think I brought it home with me."

"You were saying," said Shire, leaning forward to command Zenas Wheelock's attention, "that you bought downtown property at the time of that boom long ago."

"Not during the boom. In the panic, afterwards."

"Still hold it?"

"Yes."

"Whew! Downtown property bought in the 'thirties at panic prices!" Shire spoke like a greedy child admiring a birthday cake; nevertheless there was interrogation in his tone and in his face as he added: "I certainly congratulate you, Mr. Wheelock, on having such an investment."

UNDER their shaggy brows the old man's gray-blue eyes looked out from their frame of cross-hatched wrinkles to where Jason was setting out the patent sprinkler preparatory to watering the grass and flowers, and Shire, concluding that he had not heard, repeated in a louder voice: "Yes sir, I certainly congratulate you."

"Thank you," answered Zenas Wheelock, still looking at the lawn.

"That reminds me, Father," his son put in, "Mrs. Boddy came to see me today. This time it's a leak around one of the chimneys. I ordered it repaired."

"Hm-m!" A noncommittal sound came from the old man's throat, and there ensued a silence which was broken by Shire, who in a casual tone inquired:

"Where's the property located?"

But again Zenas Wheelock apparently failed to hear, and Shire turned with a repetition of the question to Harris, whose thoughts were evidently far away, for he gazed blankly at Shire for a moment before replying.

"Oh—Napier Place."

This time Zenas Wheelock heard clearly enough, for:

"My former residence," he quickly supplemented.

Shire appeared surprised.

"Well, well," he exclaimed, "the city certainly has changed!"

"Yes," said the old man reflectively, "and it's going to change still more."

"Why, that's exactly what I've been telling you," said the real-estate man with the air of one victorious in argument.

"But," said the other, "the change I speak of will be for the better, not the worse."

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Zenas Wheelock raised his right eyebrow, and his face for a moment took on a quizzical expression, but when he spoke he ignored the last remark.

"Land in Napier Place," he said, "will some day be very valuable. I may not live to see it, but I trust that you may, and I prophesy with confidence that my grandson will." He indicated Alan, who was seated on the steps, apparently engrossed in the book his aunt had been reading to him when the two visitors arrived.

"Why," asserted Shire, "it's valuable now."

"Not to decent people."

But with that statement Shire promptly disagreed.

"Mr. Wheelock, you're wrong about that. Your property ought to pay you well without"—he glanced apologetically at Miss Wheelock—"without being put to—to any improper purpose."

THE old man merely gazed across the lawn, but Harris Wheelock appeared interested.

"We rent to a Mrs. Boddy," he explained, "a respectable woman who takes roomers; but the house is never full and she barely scrapes along. Naturally nobody wants to live in such a district if he can afford to go elsewhere. The result is that for years we've been just about able to cover repairs and taxes. In fact we don't always manage that, but there seems to be nothing else to do."

"On the contrary," declared Shire, "there's several things you could do. I know all about land values and rentals down there. I have to; it's my business, same as it's my business to know values every place else in the city. You see, Wheelock, parties that own that character of property most generally don't care to handle it themselves." Harris nodded. "So they do business through agents," continued Shire. "Naturally we ain't looking for business of that kind, but we recognize the fact that we're a real-estate firm and can't afford to be too finicky. A foot of land's just a foot of land to us, wherever situated, and if we're the agents then it's our business to make that foot of land pay. Why, you'd hardly believe it if I was to tell you the names of certain parties that own property in that district. They don't know anything about what's going on—Lord bless you, no! It's the agent. S'pose they figure that what they don't know ain't going to hurt 'em." He winked broadly at Harris; then turning to the old man, and discovering a frown upon his face, he took a less cynical tone, continuing:

"I'm not my brother's keeper, but I'm frank to say I don't see how decent people can tolerate that sort of thing no matter how high the rents are. What's more, it ain't necessary. If I owned property of that character I'd be mighty particular about my tenants, but just the same I'd make it pay."

"May I ask how?" inquired Harris.

"That," said the real-estate man airily, "depends on the way a person feels about a lot of things. A man can be finicky about one thing and not about something else. Some folks would feel all right about letting property to a good honest gambler, say, that would pay a high rent, but," he added quickly, "others wouldn't. Some might prefer a saloon. There's saloons and saloons, you know. You get a good German saloon-keeper and you'll find"—

"Mr. Shire," put in Zenas Wheelock, "my wife and I spent many happy years in Napier Place. Mr. Lincoln visited us there and it was there that my wife died. I was reluctant to leave, but commerce crowded me out. What has happened to the neighborhood since is to me a source of great unhappiness, and your suggestions are highly distasteful."

FOR a moment Shire stared at the old man, who, from beneath his shaggy brows, returned his gaze.

"I'm sorry to hear that, Mr. Wheelock," he said. "I understood your son was asking me a general question and I was giving him a general answer. I certainly respect your sentiments, sir, and that brings me to what I was going to say. I was going to say I thought the best thing to do would be to sell. You could get a good price, and that would be an end of all your bother."

"I should be glad to sell to any respectable person who would furnish proper guarantees."

"Guarantees of what?"

"That the property would never be put to base uses."

"Your proposition's not practical, Mr. Wheelock. A seller's responsibility ends when the sale is made."

"That is a matter of opinion."

"Well," said Shire, "it's simply out of the question to ask a man to guarantee what he's going to do with land he buys."

"I shouldn't ask that. The guarantee I should require would cover only what the buyer was not to do."

"Well, you'll never be able to make any such arrangement."

"I don't expect to. I expect to hold the property until changes in the district make such a requirement unnecessary."

"I'm afraid you'll hold it a good while, then," answered Shire with a faint smile. "I can't agree with you that land in Napier Place will ever be worth more than it is now."

"But you are a real-estate man," Zenas Wheelock answered, and Shire wondered what made Holden smile.

"Yes, and my judgment on Chicago property is considered pretty good," he answered. "Just as a matter of interest, Mr. Wheelock, would you mind stating why you look for an improvement down there?"

"Because of the proximity of Napier Place to the railroad stations."

Shire shook his head. "Some of the worst slums in the whole country are near railroad stations," he said.

"That will change with time," Zenas Wheelock replied. "You're comparatively a young man, Mr. Shire, but you're older than our railroads. And of course my memory runs far back of that. We were very proud of our stage lines in the late 'thirties and early 'forties when John Frink consolidated three thousand miles of routes just in that period we began to get a few steamers, too. The first one came in 1832 but a vessel couldn't get into the river then because of the bar at the mouth. She lay offshore about the foot of Madison Street and the whole town turned out in its best bib and tucker to see her. Then, when we made harbor improvements and began to get used to steamers, along came the railroad. We had a tremendous celebration over the first train in the fall of 'forty-eight. That doesn't seem long ago—only thirty-six years."

"Yes," Shire put in, "I can remember the excitement. I lived down in Southern Illinois then, but of course we heard about it."

"MODERN transportation is still new"

continued the old man. "Maybe you recall when they first tried night cars, as they called them. Wooden shelves to lie on. That was thought a great improvement. Then in the 'sixties along came George M. Pullman. His first business in Chicago was jacking up buildings when the city grade was being raised. Back in New York State, where he came from, he'd worked in a cabinet-maker's shop, and presently he got the Chicago & Alton road to let him have a couple of coaches to experiment with and turned them into sleeping cars. They ran them between Chicago and St. Louis, and

that was thought wonderful, but they were too small, so he spent a lot of his own money and built the *Pioneer*. That car was called the wonder of the age, but it was nothing to what he's done since.

"My experience of life," he continued, "seems to indicate that human progress goes by cycles. First you get a period of experimentation and crude development; then, with prosperity, comes a period of reflection and adjustment; and finally you get enlightenment and begin to plan with the future in mind. It appears to me that the railroads are just passing into the second cycle and that this city's in a corresponding stage. The big changes have only begun but they're coming fast. I expect we shall have railroad stations on a scale people hardly dream of now, and the land near them will be so valuable that buildings will pile up higher than anything we know today. That's what I'm looking forward to for Napier Place."

"How high do you imagine buildings will go?" asked Shire.

"Twenty stories, possibly."

"No, Mr. Wheelock," said the real-estate man, "that's out of the question. I happen to have studied the problem of building heights. I know all about it. Five or six stories is the best height and ten's about as high as you can go. For one thing, the more your building weighs, the more she's bound to settle, especially in soft soil like ours; for another, the higher you build the thicker your walls have got to be to carry your loads, and all that masonry cuts down your floor-space too much. Then there's the question of elevators. If your building's too high one elevator can't give satisfactory service—too slow to suit people in this age of hustle—so you put in another elevator, and there goes more of your floor-space. And on top of that you got to consider safety; if you make your elevator cable more than so long she's liable to drop. So you see your idea isn't practical."

"Not at present," agreed the other, "but man seems to find ways, ultimately, to make whatever he needs."

"It doesn't strike me so," returned Shire. "Look at all the things we need that we haven't got. For instance, if man could make what he needs wouldn't he make something to stop the cholera epidemic in Europe and yellow fever down South?"

"I don't doubt that will be done in time. We're pretty well rid of smallpox epidemics, and they tell us some one in Paris has found a cure for mad-dog bite. And who knows what electricity's going to do for us? The scientists say it's certain to replace gas for illumination and I see by the papers they're propelling street-cars with it somewhere in the East."

"Oh," said Shire, "they'll try anything. Darius Green tried to fly, but he didn't get far."

"I shouldn't be surprised if flying machines would some day be successful," Zenas Wheelock said. "I don't believe I'd have thought so forty years ago, but I've been fooled so often by the inventors that I'm afraid to be a skeptic any more."

"Well, Mr. Wheelock," said Shire with a smile, "I guess there's a good many matters you and I wouldn't look at quite the same."

"Undoubtedly," replied the old man. "But there's one thing I'm sure we agree about," continued Shire, "and that's the district you live in. It's certainly a mighty nice part of town. How long has it been settled?"

"My neighbor Charles Cleaver built the first house in 'fifty-three," Zenas Wheelock replied. "He paid the Illinois Central thirty-eight hundred dollars a year to run trains so other settlers would come. It was called Cleaversville until a few years ago, and that ought always to be the name. It wasn't trees that made Chicago; it was men."

SHIRE rose. "Well," he said, "all this has been mighty interesting. It isn't often a man meets one of the real old-timers any more, and I'll hope to have the pleasure of talking with you again. I expect to be coming out this way oftener from now on. In fact I wouldn't be surprised if I'd get me some land and build out here one of these days, though I don't want anything said about it now."

"I shall not mention it," Zenas Wheelock assured him.

"If I do decide to build," continued Shire impressively, "I'll guarantee it won't be a house anybody around here will feel the need to apologize for. No sir, it'll be something choice—a mansion."

Having shaken hands with Zenas Wheelock and Miss Martha, he came to Harris.

"Holden tells me you have some nice books," he said, pumping Harris' hand. "I must get you to show 'em to me some day."

"You're interested in books?" Harris brightened, and as Shire and Holden started toward the steps he moved along with them.

"Can't say I know much about 'em, but I'd like to look at 'em."

"I'll be glad to show them to you."

Discovering Alan on the steps beside the lilac bush, Shire playfully pinched his ear in passing.

"Reading, eh, young man?" he said, and as they strolled on toward the street he smiled at Harris, saying: "Like father, like son."

As a matter of fact, however, Alan had not been reading. His eyes had traveled repeatedly down the same page but had transmitted no message to his brain, which had been occupied with the talk on the porch behind him. Strange talk. He had comprehended only part of what was said, but the part he didn't understand was somehow interesting, too. Mr. Shire was a funny-looking man, he thought, as he watched him walking toward the gate between Mr. Holden and his father. Somehow he wasn't like the people who usually came to call. Most people tried to get his grandfather to tell about adventures with the Indians, and Alan liked to be there when those stories were told, but Mr. Shire hadn't asked for stories; he seemed to want to do the talking himself.

What was it about that street that seemed to worry them, he wondered? Napier Place. The family lived there long ago, before he was born. He had heard his grandfather tell of Lincoln's visit, but somehow he had thought the house burned in the Chicago Fire. People talked as if everything burned then. But it was still there. Some day he'd like to see it.

He was about to turn and speak of this to his Aunt Martha when from the porch behind him came her voice.

"A singular individual," she remarked.

"Yes," replied her father. "I'm sorry Luke Holden saw fit to bring him here."

"So I observed," said his daughter, and from her tone Alan knew that she was smiling.

"Did you? I tried not to show it."

"You're not a good dissembler, Father." The shadow of the grape arbor had been slowly reaching out across the lawn; Jason came from the back yard and turned on the hose, setting awirl the spidery arms of the automatic sprinkler; presently Alan's father returned to the porch, and the boy's thoughts, which had drifted away from the talk behind him came back to it again.

"Sometimes," he heard his grandfather say, "I'm sorry I sold that land to Luke Holden."

"Oh, no, Father," said Miss Martha, "not when Nannie loves her garden so."

"Nannie doesn't own it."

"But there's an agreement," put in Harris.



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THE old man made no direct reply. "Luke says he's going to vote for Cleveland," he announced grimly; and he added: "I dislike that man Shire."

"Of course," answered Harris tolerantly, "he's rather common, but I've heard he's very clever in a business way."

"Oh," bantered his sister, "he won you over by asking you about your books. That's why you walked along with him."

"He drives a good horse," said Harris undisturbed.

"I hope he won't drive it out here any more," declared Zenas Wheelock.

"Well, Father," answered Harris, "I'm sorry to tell you your wish isn't going to come true. Luke's invited him to bring his family out to dinner."

"Does he know the family?" Martha asked. "He's met the daughter and he says she's a howling beauty."

"I tell you those people will be moving out here to live," prophesied Zenas gloomily.

"In a 'mansion,'" supplemented his daughter, accenting the word derisively.

"That will give this modest region something to live up to, won't it?" Her irony drew a grin from Harris, but there was no response from the old man, who was pacing up and down the porch, and Martha Wheelock, perceiving that he was more deeply disturbed than she had supposed, took another tone:

"I don't think there's any need to worry, Father," she said gently. "Even if he should carry out his dark threat there are enough nice people living around us to give the neighborhood its color. A Shire or two won't make any difference."

But her soothing words left him unmoved. "It's a great misfortune," he insisted.

"I've seen men like him before. He's crazy after money and he'll get other people crazy. It's contagious. They'll be slicing up the land and selling it in narrow strips to make a few dollars more out of it; people will put up cramp-shouldered houses; we'll have renters coming in before we're through." He stopped walking and turned toward his daughter. "No, Martha, don't you believe it won't make any difference! I tell you one man like this Shire—maybe a well-meaning man, too—can change things as you'd hardly believe possible. I hope I'm wrong, but I'm mightily afraid we're in for a bad spell."

Struck by the deep feeling in his grandfather's voice, Alan had turned, and from his seat on the steps was looking at him. There was an immense impressiveness about him as he stood there. He reminded Alan of a picture in his book of Bible Stories, and that image of him was so deeply etched on Alan's mind that no other vision of his grandfather ever superseded it. Years afterwards when, in an environment almost fantastically unlike that of his youth, he told his children of his own simple boyhood, and repeated to them tales of Zenas Wheelock's adventures, there would emerge out of the mists of memory that vivid semblance of his grandfather as he stood on the porch that afternoon, with the translucent green of leaves behind him, a noble old figure gazing into the future with a seer's eyes.

But as Alan was presently to learn, Zenas Wheelock, seeing much, did not see all that was to occur as a result of Shire's visit.

(The ensuing chapters in this fine novel of old days and new; develop rapidly in power and interest. Don't fail to read them in the next, the March, issue.)

THE SUPREME INSULT

(Continued from page 87)

to get Roger Boment. Rhoda was maid of honor at Agnes' wedding; and when Agnes said:

"I'm surprised you aren't married by this time, Rhoda. You've always been the most popular girl in town," Rhoda smiled back:

"I don't want to get tied up too quickly. I want to be sure when I marry. No use marrying at all if you can't better yourself."

Which wasn't a dig at Agnes. She had bettered herself in getting Roger Boment.

Then Howard Grant moved to Lucas City. He came from Farmington to work in his uncle's bank. He was a tall, serious fellow with a rather finely chiseled face. He attracted Rhoda immediately—a new man, in a good position, a nephew of Wesley Grant the banker. Could a girl ask for more? Or as much? Howard Grant was not very accustomed to women. He was an only child, and had left Farmington after the death of his father. His mother had died several years before, and now he was all alone. He had been shy as a boy, and after he was grown, the girls in Farmington had not attracted him a great deal, nor had they made any serious efforts to attract him.

ALTHOUGH Rhoda's feeling of inferiority may have started with her defeat when Agnes captured Roger, she did not let it stand in the way of trying her charms on Howard. The same wiles that had not proved effective with Roger Boment captured Howard Grant almost immediately. He liked her girlishness, her seeming wonder over life, her helplessness, her giggle. Two months after he came to Lucas City, he was one of the group on the Morris front porch on Sunday. Another month, and he was calling frequently in the evening. A month later he and Rhoda were engaged.

Rhoda and Howard had a simple home wedding and went to Chicago on a honeymoon. They didn't visit Jessie—she had a

small apartment and the babies—but went to a downtown hotel instead. Rhoda bought clothes with the money her parents had given her for a trousseau. She felt it would have been ridiculous if she spent her money in Lucas City when she had the chance to buy things in Chicago. She made up her mind right then not to let herself go just because she had achieved matrimony. She spent almost all the days of her honeymoon going through the Chicago shops. Sometimes she persuaded Howard to go with her. She pointed out to him the niceties of women's apparel, teaching him how to distinguish good clothes, as she saw them, from things slightly "tacky." She felt that if he knew more about women's clothes, he would appreciate her, see her superiority to the women who didn't know about things.

Back in Lucas City, she and Howard bought one of the new houses that the Ellisons were putting up out in Cambridge Addition. Howard's uncle lent him the money, taking a first mortgage which didn't have to be paid back at all, and a second mortgage which Howard paid to his uncle in installments. The house was "English Cottage style," very new in Lucas City, and Rhoda furnished it prettily according to her own ideas of decoration, and with the help of Agnes Boment. There was mahogany in the living-room—the legs of some of the pieces a bit too spindling for comfort. You were apt to knock down a table if you leaned against it. One of the bedrooms was done in mahogany, and the other had a set of bird's-eye maple furniture—very good, then, in Lucas City. Rhoda was glad she could afford to keep up with things. Her sister Jessie's apartment had been awfully ordinary—like a thousand other apartments; but then, Joe didn't get a very large salary. Mildred, though she had money enough, had no taste at all. She bought just the first piece of furniture that the clerk showed her

in the local store. Her house was a hodge-podge. Rhoda wondered how Jerome stood it, and then smiled—why, Jerome knew less about things than Mildred did.

Rhoda saw to it that Howard knew. She insisted that he read the book of interior decoration that Agnes loaned her. When he told her that he would take her word for things in the house, she worried him until he read the book. She wanted him to know about things—to be actually informed; but it was just as important that he appreciate her and see what she was doing.

As time passed, Agnes and Rhoda laughed to themselves over the way the women in Lucas City let themselves go. There was Mildred—who was only three years older than Rhoda, and looked ten years older at the very least. Mildred, taking Jerome's hearty figure as a criterion, evidently, allowed her own figure to develop in the same manner. Always buxom and healthy, Mildred seemed to pay no attention to her looks at all after her children were born. It wasn't as if she didn't have time, couldn't afford to look nice. Rhoda knew that Mildred had a good cook, and a nurse for the children. Mildred just didn't care. She parted her hair rather haphazardly almost in the middle, and did it into a stupid knot on the top of her head.

There was Jennie Crawford, who five years ago had been as pretty as any girl you'd want to see any place, and now Jennie, in her way, looked just as bad as Mildred. Only Jennie was scrawny, and her face was filling with tiny wrinkles. Jennie couldn't be bothered with creams or cosmetics, it seemed. And Lois Ellison—who had married one of the Ellisons—wasn't much better. Too fat! No style at all. There was Mrs. Kessler—but that woman was the limit, really. Patty Kessler, who had been Patty Richard when she was a girl, and really a nobody until she had married Dick Kessler, was an example of "What a Woman Shouldn't Do." Rhoda and Agnes often laughed at her, and Rhoda frequently pointed her out to Howard and giggled over her appearance. Patty, as a girl, had been fairly pretty, too. She had married Dick Kessler when she was eighteen, and Dick had died a few years later.

"I think," Rhoda would giggle, "that he must have seen Patty in the morning or on the way to an afternoon euchre party, and it was too much for him, and that's why he died. Did you ever see such a fright?"

It seemed to Rhoda that if Patty had any sense at all, she would have kept up so she could get married again. No one would want to marry a person who looked like Patty. She had one child, a boy born a few months before the death of her husband, and she had let herself go completely after the baby was born. She talked baby-talk to him after he became too old for baby-talk, and she wore unbecoming clothes which seemed to have dropped on her and which hadn't always hit the right places. Occasionally, when Agnes and Rhoda stopped in to call on Patty in the afternoon, they would find the breakfast dishes still unwashed and the living-room in disorder. There was no taste in the living-room, either. Haphazard furniture such as Mildred had—a lot of silly cushions which didn't harmonize with the curtains—red mahogany armchairs which might be comfortable enough but certainly did not add much to the appearance of the room. The worst of it, Rhoda thought, was that Patty continued to go to parties. She went whenever she was invited, in spite of the fact that she usually sat out dance after dance.

At any party Rhoda attended she was still the center of a little group. Even as the years passed, "the boys" still surrounded her. She had all of her dances taken almost as soon as she arrived. She would pretend roughly that she thought the boys ought to pay more attention to the younger girls, and "not spend all your time on little me,"

but she was aware how delighted she was at their attentions. What if she did giggle a little too much for her age! She felt she didn't look her age, anyway.

As Rhoda grew older, she continued to be as careful of her appearance as she had ever been. If her type became a bit old-fashioned as the years passed, she never noticed it. Didn't men always like fluffy, dainty women? She was still plump, though rather trim of waist—she didn't "see anything" in the new "straight up and down" figures. Her full face was still smooth, her flat blue eyes still round with wonder when a man talked with her. She liked to have the window adjusted, her handkerchief picked up.

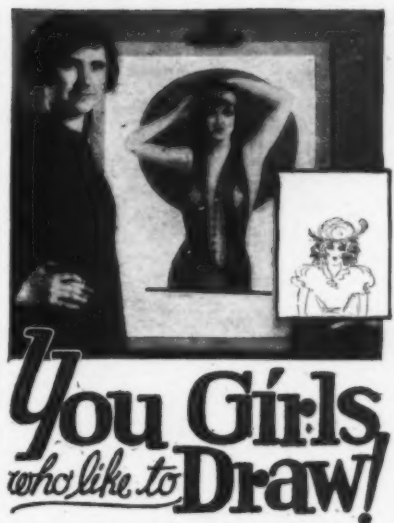
When she had been married ten years, and was thirty-four, she went on a strict diet so that she wouldn't lose her figure. She went without all of the things she cared most about—chocolates, pastries, potatoes. Every time she heard of a new diet or a new combination of foods, she adopted it, weighing herself carefully at the end of a week or two. She ate bran and more fruit than she cared about, and quantities of cabbage and lettuce. She did succeed in preserving her figure, though she felt hungry most of the time.

RHODA didn't have any children. It wasn't altogether on account of her appearance that she didn't have any, though that had something to do with it. No use getting older any faster than you have to. What was the use of having children and suffering a lot and maybe being an invalid for years? Children didn't care anything about you after they grew up, anyhow. Look at her family—her parents living right in town, and she and Mildred never went near them unless they had to. And Jessie living in Chicago and hardly coming home at all, and they all grumbled at family dinners. Children are a nuisance.

Agnes and Rhoda went regularly to the best beauty-parlor in Lucas City. At night, no matter how late she came home from a party, and the nights that she fell asleep over a book as well, Rhoda never neglected her face. She would sit in front of her dressing-table and rub a cleansing cream into it, and then apply an astringent and then a skin-fool, using the upward movement of her fingers as the skin specialist had taught her. She rubbed off most of the skin-fool before retiring, though she felt it would have been better for her skin had she left it on; but she knew how badly it looked to Howard—they still occupied the same bedroom—if her face was too greasy. In the morning she would rub in more cold cream and rub it off, on the always half-soiled towel which she kept somewhere around her dressing-table. Then she would apply powder and rouge and lip-salve. She wore graceful negligees for breakfast. She wanted Howard to see how well she looked; she reminded him in a thousand ways how she was keeping up her appearance—staying practically the way she had been as a girl.

Even while she was having a good time at parties, dancing or surrounded by the men she knew, she would dart quick glances around to see what Howard was doing. From the time of her marriage she had been jealous. Howard didn't care much about dancing, but she liked dances and parties a great deal, and didn't see why she shouldn't go to them. It's bad enough living in a place like Lucas City, when she was bored there a lot of the time. If you didn't go to the few things the town offered—

When she saw Howard out of the tail of her eye, the mood of her evening would change. If he were with Cleo Bennett or Leah Wilson or any of the other younger girls, a terrible jealousy would come over her. Why, those girls were years younger than she was. Prettier, too. A different



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type—bold, independent, boyish. They knew all the tricks that she knew, and a thousand tricks she knew nothing about. Her little ways were all right with the men she knew; but she felt, though she never acknowledged it even to herself, that the men who were nice to her were nice probably because girls like Cleo and Leah didn't care anything about them—didn't want to be bothered with them even. She didn't tell this to Howard, however. She wanted Howard to see how popular and desirable she was.

She was jealous of every woman Howard looked at. Howard couldn't help seeing that the younger women were fresher and gayer and prettier. Howard wasn't like the other men who were nice to her. He was far better looking—younger looking, for one thing. At thirty-six, he was still a young man. She had captured him easily when she first met him. He hadn't known much about women, then. Well, she tried to teach him about women—eagerly pointed out their little tricks to him so he could see through them, wouldn't be taken in. Rhoda was even jealous of Agnes Boment—very jealous of Agnes. Agnes never knew that Rhoda had wanted to marry Roger, but Rhoda remembered it. Agnes had been triumphant once, and as Rhoda's best friend, she was always coming to see them, and they were always spending the evening with the Boments. Agnes' home was attractive, too—a bit more bizarre than Rhoda's. She wanted to make full use of what she had learned in Chicago. Agnes kept up with things too, had a sharp tongue and was quick at repartee. Agnes was good-looking, and didn't have to bother about dieting.

As the years passed, Rhoda grew more and more jealous—jealous of everyone. Girls, who a few years ago had been children, sprang miraculously into slender, graceful young ladies and appeared at parties—for no other reason, Rhoda felt, than to entice Howard Grant away from her. Agnes was always laughing with Howard, turning her face up to Howard's and standing close to him. Because they saw each other so frequently, Agnes and Howard had little jokes together, some of which Rhoda didn't quite understand. On Saturday nights, sometimes, at neighborhood parties, when Agnes and Howard each had had perhaps one highball too many, they would grow affectionate toward each other. Roger Boment laughed at this, but it was serious to Rhoda. Hadn't she always heard that a man's real feelings came out when he is drunk?

CLEO BENNETT married Andrew Parsons—but half a dozen other pretty young girls took her place. Rhoda was worrying constantly, now. She was never at ease about Howard unless she was with him alone, or he was with some woman like Patty Kessler. Funny—Howard didn't mind talking to Patty. Rhoda was glad that he didn't. It gave him some one to talk to, and gave her a safe, comfortable feeling, besides. She felt he couldn't help comparing her to Patty. Patty, dowdier than ever as the years passed. Thick around the hips. As fat as Mildred, really; and Mildred had absolutely "let herself go"—always wearing dark, ill-fitting clothes. Her hair was always mussed, and not too clean-looking. Her eyes, her one good feature, were concealed these years behind unbecoming glasses. Rhoda was glad there was a woman like Patty Kessler, if for nothing else than to show Howard the difference in women.

Whenever they came from an evening at Patty Kessler's, Rhoda would laugh over Patty's home—dust in the corners, ill-assorted, old-fashioned furniture, curtains always slightly askew, and Patty herself with her seemingly always embarrassed laughter, and not knowing quite what to say about anything. Rhoda wondered sometimes what Howard did talk about when he was with

Patty. Then one night at the Ellisons' she overheard them.

"Oh, Howard Grant," Patty had said with her embarrassed giggle, "it's nice of you to talk to an old, unpopular thing like I am. I—I didn't have anybody to talk to. Are you sure you aren't doing it just out of sympathy? Rhoda is always so gay and jolly—has such a good time at parties."

Rhoda didn't hear Howard's answer, but it had been something inconsequential, she knew. What a fool Patty was! Didn't she know that wasn't the way to talk to men—to accentuate her own worst qualities and to call attention to her lack of popularity? Well, it was a good thing there were women like Patty Kessler. She told Agnes about it, and she and Agnes had a good laugh over that conversation. Rhoda liked Agnes when she wasn't jealous of her—and when Howard wasn't along.

As Rhoda grew older, it was more difficult to keep up. It took a lot of time to rub cold cream into your face in the morning and at night. Howard was always grumbling about wanting to put out the lights or put up the window, and no matter how carefully you massaged your face, or had it massaged by the best beauty specialists, after a while the wrinkles wouldn't go away. Rhoda, who had made fun of her mother's "hurty" feet, now found that she was having foot trouble of her own. Of course she hadn't ever forced her feet into shoes whole sizes too small for her the way her mother had, but she had worn shoes that were rather—well, a snug fit. She was only too glad now to get her shoes off the minute she came home, and sometimes she limped just a little.

In spite of all that she did, Rhoda had a double chin—there was no doubt about it; and her figure was broadening out as her mother's and as Mildred's and Jessie's had.

"It's in our family for the women to get fat," her mother told her with the most absurdly contented resignation. Mildred, too, seemed to think there was nothing unusual in settling down. Rhoda wanted to settle down, in a way. Her eyes frequently hurt her—those large, light, rather flat-looking eyes were far-sighted, the oculist told her, and she needed glasses all of the time—like Patty Kessler. She did wear the glasses for reading, but as she read infrequently, her glasses weren't used very much.

Why, if she had worn glasses all the time, the way the oculist told her, she would have looked like an old woman! She didn't want to be an old woman—didn't want to lose Howard. If there were only some way she could keep Howard—and let down a little! But she had taught him about women—about keeping up. What would she do—all the years ahead?

Rhoda didn't look as well in the clothes that were being worn—little straight dresses. They were all right for young girls, but not at all suitable for a woman with—well, a mature figure. Agnes could wear them well enough, but even Agnes had lost some of the style that she had had when she came back from Chicago years before, the style that had enabled her to capture Roger Boment.

Rhoda had been touching up her hair for years, but when she had been married fifteen years—when she was thirty-nine—she had to stop, for she felt that this touching up was making her hair get too thin. There was a lot of gray in her hair, too. Too many gray hairs to pull out, any more. She was afraid to use anything to hide them. Oh, well, she was still keeping up as well as she could—doing her best. She hoped Howard appreciated it.

HOWARD was still young looking at forty-one. There were some gray hairs at his temples but they really made him look more distinguished. Rather bashful when he came to Lucas City, he had ac-

quired an ease and an urbanity when he was with men—meeting them every day in the bank—that astonished Rhoda. Men liked him. He was still slender—stooped just a little. His face, usually grave, was a little thinner and more aquiline. He was a fine-looking man. No doubt of that. His position in the bank had improved. His uncle had done a lot for him and Howard himself had ability. Rhoda was glad that she had kept up. Hard work, of course, but now she could almost breathe a little easier. She still showed Howard in a thousand ways the faults of the other women they knew. There were the young girls of course, but after all, she had to be fair to Howard—he didn't notice them a great deal. Maybe, now that she had spent the years teaching Howard about women—had kept up with things. . . .

Howard went away on a fishing trip. He went away nearly every year, and Rhoda always told herself that she was glad when he went. She was glad in a way because there were only men on the trip. Still, you never could tell whom he might meet. This year he went away a little earlier than usual and he didn't take his fishing things. When Rhoda, hovering over him as he packed, asked him about that, he said something about buying the things when he got there. Later Rhoda tried to persuade herself that he had acted peculiarly, but she really hadn't noticed anything at the time.

When Rhoda heard that Patty Kessler had given up her house and she and her son had gone to New York for a visit she didn't think anything especially about it. Poor Patty Kessler! Quite an old woman now—fat, settled. She'd always been dowdy-looking, had never seemed to care anything about her own appearance or about the appearance of her home or about being popular—the things that counted. Funny, she'd even care to go to New York for a visit. What would she find to see in New York?

Then the note came—the unbelievable note from Howard. He and Patty Kessler

had run away together! Like that! Why, Patty Kessler was the silliest woman she knew—dumb—stupid—without style!

The endless days of cold cream and massage and prinking, the endless hours in which she had shown Howard her superiority, her neatness, her good humor, her popularity, rose in front of her. She had been jealous of Howard, always jealous, jealous of every pretty girl, every new face—and now Howard had run away—with Patty Kessler!

There were details. She, Rhoda, was to get a divorce, and there would be alimony and enough to live on—the house was paid for. Patty and Howard were going to stay in New York. Howard hadn't gone on the fishing trip at all, and he had got a position with a New York banking firm. New York—why, she hadn't even dared dream of living there!

Agnes found out little crumbs from Howard's lawyer and brought them eagerly to Rhoda. It was comfort Howard wanted, it seemed, comfort and contentment and a settled feeling—a home. He wanted to grow old easily and peacefully without so much "fuss and feathers," he said.

"When I think," Rhoda would say to a sympathetic group of her women friends, or when she was alone with Agnes, "when I think how I slaved for that man! I never let myself settle down. I always kept up in every way—made his home bright and cheery.

"And you know how popular I've always been, but I never let my popularity interfere with my home life. I never 'carried on' with any other man, never neglected Howard in any way. You know how I never let myself go. Then a woman like Patty Kessler!

"You never can tell. It's these quiet, dowdy women who are the sly ones! It's a supreme insult, that's what it is—a supreme insult—to think that Howard Grant hadn't learned any better than to prefer Patty Kessler to me—after all the years I put in teaching him about women."

CHILDREN OF THE WIND

(Continued from page 69)

and there was good chance of bringing down some prize on the homeward way. As they emerged from the trees, about a mile back from the river, at the edge of a reedy water-hole they came upon a "sunder" of pig, led by a sturdy young boar whose valor surpassed his discretion. Gnashing his formidable tusks, he charged the party, only to meet his fate upon Borg's massive spear. With a chorus of grunts and squeals, the rest of the "sunder" raced off through the long grass, but not before an arrow from Gort's bow had brought down one of the leggy youngsters. Calling off Fanna, who was enthusiastically pursuing the fugitives, he picked up his toothsome prize.

THAT night, over the cave-mouth fire, while the two women and the child slept on their wolf and leopard skins in the recesses of the cave, Gort sat long with the wise old Säg, expounding his new and wonderful idea about the wild horses. The vision of the clutched leopard borne along like the wind on the back of the maddened stallion possessed him. If men could only be carried like that, what sure hunting! What far, swift journeyings! What crushing triumphs over their foes, the shambling, hump-shouldered tribes of the west, the bestial, clay-faced hordes surging up at long intervals from south and east!

"I will tame these horses, these children of the wind, as I have tamed the red wolf," he muttered musingly.

"These horses are very savage and very strong," mumbled Säg, chewing on a length of sweet cane.

"Fanna," said Gort sharply.

The great ruddy-colored dog sprang up from where she was lying at the other side of the fire, slunk over and thrust her head between her master's knees, gazing up at him with anxious, loving eyes. Gort stroked her head reassuringly, and she lay down at his feet. "The red wolves," continued Gort, "are very savage and very strong. I have tamed them."

The old man nodded, and sucked thoughtfully on the sweet cane. Presently he spat a mouthful of the chewed fiber onto the fire, and propounded a grave problem:

"If you were on the back of one of those very swift beasts, how would you make him go the way you wanted him to go, my son?"

"I've thought of that," said Gort, his eyes sparkling triumphantly. "I would put a ring of hide rope round his muzzle, with a finer rope on each side, which I would hold in my hands as I sat on his back. Then I could pull his head round to one side or the other, and he'd have to go the way his head went."

"Perhaps!" said Säg, grinning. "Perhaps he wouldn't go at all."

Gort laughed confidently. "I'd make him," said he.

"But first," persisted the old man, "how are you going to catch him?"

Gort heaved a troubled sigh. "That I cannot clearly see, yet," he confessed. "There are many difficulties. It will need much thought. I will take counsel with you, my father, and also with Borg."

"He has many ideas, that young man," muttered Säg, "—mostly very foolish ones. He speaks before he thinks."



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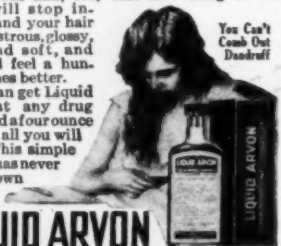
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"But among his many foolish ideas I may find a wise one," retorted Gort, rising. "Now I am tired. I will go to sleep." He turned back to his pile of skins. But the old man, who slept little by reason of pains in his injured leg, sat on beside the fire till dawn, pondering the vast new problem which this wonderful, restless-minded son of his had set himself to solve. "Surely," he mused at last, "the spirit of our great father Gröm has descended upon my son."

Early the following morning Gort went over to Borg's small cave and led the young man forth, ostensibly upon another hunting expedition. But when well beyond the reach of curious ears and eyes, he called a halt, and squatting in the shade of a mimosa thicket, proceeded to unfold his great purpose. The young man's imagination took fire instantly. He saw himself careering at mad speed over the plain astride a mighty stallion with streaming mane and tail. He saw himself in triumphant chase of the bison and the water-buck, bringing them down with spear or arrow, and even defying the pursuit of the terrible long-horned bull. He sprang to his feet in such excitement that Fanna, crouching beside Gort, sprang up also, with a low growl, and peered about her suspiciously, expecting to see some enemy close at hand.

"Let us go at once," he exclaimed, "and catch one of those children of the wind. We will wound one so that I can get a grip on its mane. Surely I can stay upon its back as well as that devil-cat."

But Gort refused to move.

"Wait," said he calmly. "There are so many things to consider first."

Both Borg and the dog sat down again. Borg reluctantly and Fanna uneasy and whimpering.

"If you wound one of these horses so severely that you can catch him, he will die. What good is that?" continued Gort slowly, his eyes withdrawn beneath his shaggy brows. "And I do not think we could ever subdue one of these fierce and proud beasts unless we took it very young, as I took the whelps of the red wolf. I want one very young. I would teach it to know me and trust me. Then I would teach it to love and obey me. And then, when it was big enough, it should bear me on its back."

"We will catch one very young," cried Borg.

"But if it is very young, it will need its mother's milk, or it will die," went on Gort inexorably.

"We will catch one old enough to eat grass," persisted Borg.

"Then," said Gort, smiling, "I think it will be too old for me to teach. No, it seems to me that we must try to catch a mare heavy with young. Her we could keep, and feed, and subdue if we could not teach her. Her young we could work upon with some hope. But how to catch her? How to begin? There's the trouble."

Borg looked disappointed. This method seemed so slow. He had had vague dreams of careering home in triumph on the back of a maddened horse, to the delight of his young woman Ee-la, and the envious amazement of all the tribe. But he grasped the force of Gort's argument, and grinned at his own impatience. Then he knit his tawny brows in a resolute effort to think, to reason matters out, as Gort did.

But Gort had caught sight of that grin. "What are you laughing at?" he demanded suspiciously.

"At my own foolishness," responded the youth. "I am always jumping at things, too quick. But I am trying to learn to think. Since I am Gort's friend I cannot be quite a fool."

"Borg is indeed my friend," said Gort warmly, "my more than brother." For he loved the impetuous young giant. "Of what is my friend thinking?"

"This," replied Borg, spreading out his

great hands as if to help his slow speech, "is my thought. Perhaps it too is foolishness. But hear it. Let Gort persuade Kran the chief to order out the whole tribe for a great hunting of the horses. Far away beyond the water-holes is a deep pass in the hills. The farther end of the pass we could block up with thorn brush. The tribe, spread out very wide, with great noise and shouting and drum-beating, could drive a whole herd of horses into the pass, and shut them in there with more thorn brush so they could not escape. It would be a great hunting, a great killing, and the tribe would feast and praise Gort. We would not kill them all at once. No. But when they began to grow weak with hunger, we could pick out the mares we wanted, and entangle them with many cords, and drag them home alive to Gort's cave. That is my thought. Is it foolishness?"

Gort stared at him for some moments, his eyes grown suddenly wide and very bright. At last he spoke, and there was a thrill of wonder in his voice.

"Foolishness!" he exclaimed. "But it is wisdom indeed, my brother, great wisdom. Never could I have thought of it. The chief must know, and great will be your honor in the tribe."

"No-no!" interrupted Borg hastily. "As my idea, no one would listen to it. All would laugh, even the wise Kran. But as Gort's idea, the chief will listen, and act, even if he may doubt."

"True," agreed Gort. "But when it has succeeded, then all shall know the truth. It will mean great hunting to the tribe, not only hunting of horses but of many other swift beasts. And the honor of this new hunting will be Borg's."

THAT day there was no hunting. Gort's only desire was to get back to the caves and lay his proposals before the chief.

Now Kran, the chief, was not inventive, or imaginative. But he was clear-sighted and hard-headed. Had Gort unfolded to him his vision of subduing such a swift and mighty creature as the horse to man's service, not all his huge respect for Gort's genius would have checked his Olympic laughter. Gort had tamed the red wolf, to be sure. But a single red wolf, apart from the pack, might be killed by a strong man naked-handed. But what man, unarmed, could hope to master one of those indomitable horses, who raged with teeth and hoofs? Certainly not he, nor Gort himself, the two mightiest fighters in the tribe.

When, however, Gort laid before him the scheme for a great, collective, tribal hunt, his quick and intensely practical mind grasped its advantages at once. It was so simple, so obvious. Why had he never thought of it himself? He needed no persuasion.

For hours the chief and Gort talked the plan over, to minutest details. Then, "Leave it to me," said Kran at last. "I will call a council of the tribe for tomorrow night and explain it to them. The young men will rejoice as if I were going to lead them to battle. And everyone will be glad, for our days grow dull with prosperity."

Gort did not attend the council. He knew it was unnecessary. The chief was the chief. He was also a great organizer. He ordered; and he arranged; and he so stirred the enthusiasm of the whole tribe that on the day appointed he found it hard to persuade enough of the old men to stay at home and help the women guard the caves. Many of the younger women, indeed, derided their lords' commands and followed the hunters. And as Gort laughingly suggested to the chief, their piercing voices would add not a little to the tumult which was to terrify the hunted herd.

Of that drive it is not necessary to tell much more than that it was successful, beyond even the sanguine expectations of

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MISCELLANEOUS—CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

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Borg himself, who had conceived it. When the living net had been wide-slung about the unsuspecting pasturing herd, at a signal from the chief's deep-thundering drum it began to close in. The sun-steeped quiet of the plain was suddenly torn by such a pandemonium of mad noise as had never before affronted that ancient stillness. Screams, shrieks, yells and shouts, the rattle of the small drums, the sullen menace of the big drums, shocked the herd into a panic. They bounded into the air, galloped in circles, bunched, and stood quivering. All around them, on three sides, the deep grass was suddenly alive with leaping forms. In one direction only was the way of escape open; and that way they fled, madly, daunted by the terror of the unknown. And they fled straight toward the trap prepared for them. For wherever they sought to swerve off, to right or left, more of those yelling forms would leap wildly from the grass. On neither side was there peace, but only straight ahead. So they raced deep into that narrow defile between the hills. Then the great stores of thorn brush which had been hacked down and heaped in readiness at the chief's orders, were dragged and piled across the entrance. And the mad noises ceased.

THE tribe, now all gathered in before the barrier, waited expectantly for the chief's orders. The drive had not been without its adventures and its casualties. In its first and silent stages it had unwittingly inclosed within its net some unwanted quarry. A little pack of five gray wolves, stealthily stalking the herd in the hope of picking off some straggler, had broken through the line, gladly permitted to escape lest any struggle should alarm the herd prematurely. At another point a black panther, disturbed at its siesta in the heart of a rhododendron thicket, had pounced upon a creeping hunter's back and shattered his neck with one crunch of its deadly jaws—only to die in silence, the next instant, by a spear-thrust from the victim's nearest neighbor, a wild-haired, wild-eyed amazon of a girl. The terrible black adder, most dreaded of poison-snakes, had disposed of another unwary stalker, striking him in the throat with a full charge of venom so that he died swiftly and silently where he lay, and his fate was never known to his fellows. An old water-buffalo, aroused from his wallow in a shady mud-hole and startled by the line of men wriggling soundlessly through the grass, had badly trampled one of the prone figures as he charged through and went lumbering off, snorting with indignation. But all this was a small price to pay for the success of the drive. There were something like three score horses penned and helpless in the trap, besides several sturdy, long-headed, blackish beasts with very short, curved horns, something midway between ox and deer, which had joined the horses in their flight. These animals, which the tribe called "black-beast" and prized highly for their venison, bore some remote resemblance to the "gnu" of South African plains, and may possibly have been its progenitors.

In a few emphatic words the chief now directed the hunters to scatter down each side of the defile and kill their prey with spears, but to refrain strictly from killing more than they could carry home with them that same day. As he pointed out, there was water in the pass, and a certain amount of scanty pasturage. The prisoners could not escape. The hunters were to return, from day to day, for fresh victims; and the meat that could not be consumed in the orgy of feasting which would begin that night was to be cut up into the customary thin strips by the women and smoked, and dried in the sun for future use.

Then the tribe, breaking again into wild yells, scattered off along the steep sides of the defile, and the slaughter began. The

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maddened beasts, unable to come at their enemies among the rocks above them, galloped wildly to and fro, squealing and snorting. One reckless hunter, venturing too far down, was pounced upon and seized by a raging stallion, and savaged to death before anyone could come to his rescue.

But to all this both Gort and Borg were paying little heed. They were further along the pass, studying the action of the frantic horses, and maturing their plans. With an arrow behind the shoulder Borg brought down a plump yearling, that they might not go home empty-handed. But their eyes were all for the well-conditioned mares, which, as they calculated, were at this season all likely to be in foal, though not so dangerously far advanced as to suffer overmuch from rough usage.

That night the cooking fires glowed night long before the caves, and on the following day only a handful of lean and seasoned old hunters could arouse themselves enough to accompany Gort and Borg (who had feasted but temperately), back to the captive herd for further prey. But the orgy was continued through the next night; and on the day following, Gort and Borg set out alone, which was exactly what they wished. They carried with them a supply of ropes, both of hide and of twisted fiber—the art of ropemaking having been in the possession of the tribe for many generations, handed down, it was believed, from the legendary Gröm himself.

Arrived at the pass, they found the imprisoned remnants of the herd huddled in dejection beside the brook at the farther barrier, which was the narrowest part of the defile. The three remaining black-beasts, of more phlegmatic temperament, were pasturing calmly near the entrance. Gort taking one side of the pass and Borg the other, and each carrying looped on his arm a coil of rope with a running noose at one end, they crept noiselessly as shadows along behind the rocks, Fanna sneaking close at Gort's heels, till they were opposite their quarry. At this moment, moved by some caprice, the herd drifted close to Borg's side of the pass. Gort whistled the soft piping call of a curlew; and instantly Borg appeared, whirling his noosed rope above his head. For days he and Gort had been experimenting and practicing the cast of the noose, and had gained some clumsy skill at it. But Borg was too excited. His cast reached the mare at which it was aimed, but it fell upon her back instead of over her head, and slipped off harmlessly. She leaped into the air with a frightened squeal, and the whole herd dashed over to the other side of the pass.

They were within twenty feet of Gort when he stepped forth, whirled his coils, and threw. The herd had swerved at sight of him, and the target was perfect. His noose settled over the head of a young mare. He jerked it tight, stepped back, took a turn of the rope about a projecting rock, and secured it.

At the end of her second leap the mare threw herself. Up again instantly, she reared, battling blindly with her fore-hoofs to rid herself of the hideous choking clutch upon her throat. The herd, meanwhile, had swept on down the pass. But a stallion, glancing behind and noting the incomprehensible performance of the mare, came raging back to the rescue. In spite of all the strange horrors lately come upon him, his courage was still unbroken. He had caught a glimpse of Gort, and squealing furiously, struggled to get up the rock and reach him. An arrow from Borg's bow soared across the pass and pierced his flank. Fanna's long fangs slashed and strove to hamstring him. But his blazing eyes were fixed on Gort, whom he seemed to recognize as the arch foe. Then Gort, hard-pressed between his captive and this redoubtable adversary, stabbed down upon him with his spear,

catching him full in the chest, and his valiant spirit went forth in a scream of defiance.

Borg came racing across the level, with his ropes. The mare was on her side, still kicking but nearly strangled, her eyes rolling white and bulging from her head. Hurriedly they noosed her legs together and trussed her securely. With a supple thong of hide they muzzled her jaws so that she could not use her formidable teeth. Then Gort loosened the rope about her throat till she drew breath again.

"We have got her," cried Borg jubilantly.

"Yes," agreed Gort, his brows drawn down in anxious thought. "But what are we going to do with her?" He squatted down, and poked at the turf with his spear while he wrestled with the problem of getting his captive home, while Borg felt curiously at her quivering flanks and bristling mane, and visioned himself riding her in triumph. She could not resent his handling, for her front legs and her hind legs were roped together.

At last Gort lifted his head.

"I have it," said he. "We will so tie her legs with things that she cannot run, or kick, or strike, but can move only with short steps. We will fix a long rope to the thongs about her muzzle (which must also pass over her head to be secure), and we will lead her forward by that. If she will not go forward, we will beat her with thorns upon the rump. We will keep the noose about her neck, to choke her if necessary. And so, if we are lucky, we will bring her home unhurt. We will tether her between my cave and yours; and carry grass and water to her; and guard her by night in turn till we can build an inclosure of stakes and thorn brush to keep her in."

AND so, after much tribulation, and squealing and futile kicking, was it done. The sweating mare stood upon her feet. She found that she could move, but with short, broken steps, and only forward. If she refused to move, sharp pains stabbed her rump. If she tried to turn, her head was jerked rudely in the direction her captors willed. If she resisted obstinately, that dreadful thing clutched her throat again, filling her soul with terror. Ease was only to be found when she followed the man ahead of her who drew upon her muzzle with his rope. And so the strange procession moved slowly up to the pass.

Once out through the barrier progress became more rapid. The captive mare, apparently subdued but with a glint of unquenchable malignancy in her eyes, found that she could progress with less discomfort by moving her two forefeet and her two hindfeet alternately. She learned to canter, in fact—which was to her an entirely novel gait. She proceeded to canter, therefore, after Gort, as hard as she could, in the earnest hope of overtaking him and expressing her emotions upon him. This suited Gort so admirably that at times he allowed her almost to catch him lest her hope should die of too delayed fruition. And so, long before sunset, they arrived at the riverbank, crossed by a shallow ford (the water being low), and reached the grassy patch of level between Gort's cave and Borg's, and tethered their squealing captive beneath Gort's own mango tree.

Old Säg, with little Ah-röm at his side, limped forth to view the prize, his eyes aglow with pride. The two old women, Gort's mother and the mother of his dead wife, looked carelessly from the cave-door, and lifted their eyebrows at each other over this new foolishness of Gort's. From Borg's cave young Ee-la, whose faith, both in her own man and in Gort, was unbounded, ran forth laughing and clapping her brown hands, and stared with round eyes at the captive, before leading Borg home to refresh him with roast horseflesh and bananas.

Gort pushed a skin bowl of water within reach of his prize, told Fanna to watch her, and turned to old Säg with a sigh of satisfaction.

"The hardest part is done," he said softly. "The rest is chiefly patience."

THE captive mare was not of the temper to pine and starve herself in captivity. She cropped all the grass within reach, and devoured the armfuls which were daily pulled and thrown to her by Gort or Borg. But her flaming hostility never slumbered. Even as they threw her food to her, she would rush at them, raving, with bared teeth and beating hoofs. Borg discreetly forgot his idea of attempting to mount her. And visitors who came to view her—at a safe distance—wondered and laughed. But Gort was in no way disconcerted. He had expected nothing else of her, and he rejoiced in the indomitable spirit of her breed.

Some fifty paces to the other side of Gort's cave a little brook, brawling down out of the rocks, traversed a patch of luxuriant meadow on its way to join the river. This bit of meadow Gort and Borg surrounded with a high fence, of stakes withed securely at top and bottom and interwoven with thorn-brush. A bristling crest of thorn along the top made it impassable even to such jumpers as the leopard and the lion. Its one narrow gateway was stopped with a big thorn-bush lashed to the stakes. When this inclosure was complete, the untamable mare was once more lassoed, choked into momentary helplessness, bound, and dragged into her new quarters.

Slipping off her bonds, her captors hurriedly stepped out and secured the gateway. As soon as she recovered her breath she sprang up, screaming and snorting, and for well onto an hour she galloped round and round the inclosure, seeking a way out. Then, accepting the inevitable, she drank deep at the sparkling rivulet and settled down to pasture. Here, safe and well fed, she thrived, grew fat and sleek-coated as the monotonous weeks rolled by. Yet the monotony was not quite without relief. Many times a day one or other of her captors, or old Säg, or occasionally a curious visitor, would come and talk to her through the fence, when she would race up to meet them, with eyeballs rolling white and ears flattened to her skull, to squeal through the barrier her unquenchable hate and defiance.

The months slipped by without event, till the tribe had ceased to wonder at this strange whim of Gort's. Then in due time the wild mare gave birth to a fine and vigorous foal—to Gort's great satisfaction, a female. When the leggy little animal was about a month old Gort and Borg together roped the mare again and once more tethered her, so they might move about in the inclosure and get the foal accustomed to them. In spite of its mother's ravings, the youngster soon grew to regard them with such indifference that it would hardly get out of their way. But of the dog Fanna, who sometimes accompanied her master into the inclosure, it had an instinctive fear.

As soon as the foal had learned to pasture freely and was no longer chiefly dependent upon its mother's milk, Gort decided that the mother must be removed, lest she infect her offspring with her own implacable savagery. Borg was for the obvious course of spearing her, but this Gort vetoed; he had become attached to the incorrigible fury. But the reason he gave was that they could breed from her again, catching a stallion to mate with her even as they had captured her. They removed the foal, therefore, instead of the mother, building a small inclosure for it close beside the cave entrance, completely out of its mother's view.

"When the tribe desires another great hunting," said Gort, "we will capture a



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young stallion and turn him in with the mad mare. Perhaps she will become more reasonable then."

AND now began for Gort his real constructive experiment, for which all the rest, from the day of the great drive, had been but the preliminary spadework. The foal was given little opportunity to pasture. She was fed and watered by hand. She was fondled and talked to. She was taught not to be afraid of Fanna. She was taken daily into the cave and tethered there, and fed, and handled, till the life of these man-creatures of the caves came to seem her own life, and memories of her wild mother (whom she was never allowed even a glimpse of) faded into the dim background of her brain. But her inherited hatred of all the dog and wolf tribe remained, and Fanna was the only dog (there were a dozen now distributed among the caves) who might safely come within range of her nimble heels.

As her education progressed, Gort devised for her a simple halter of hide thongs, and led her about by it. Then he accustomed her to bearing a light burden, a bundle of dressed hides or a bale of dried grass, on her back, securely roped in place. This at first she resented, plunging and kicking to rid herself of it, or even trying to pull it off with her teeth. This latter attempt was always rebuked with sharp words and a smack on the jaw; and she speedily learned to accept the load with equanimity. Then, giving the halter rope to Borg, Gort, with some misgivings, placed Ah-röm on her back, walking beside her to hold the child on. This experiment was an immediate success, as she had taken a fancy to the child from the first and seemed to regard him as her special friend. And soon it became a daily custom for the little boy to ride her round and round the inclosure, guiding her, more or less successfully, by tugging on the halter reins.

But it was not until she was nearly three years old, and after he had tested her with heavy packs tightly roped on, that Gort ventured his own substantial weight upon her back. By this time Windrush (as Gort had named the young mare) was so tame that she made no protest whatever when Gort mounted. But it required some persuasion to make her move under his weight. She attempted to turn her head and nibble playfully at his bare legs; but this freedom he checked with a tug upon the bridle-rein. Instinctively he prodded her flanks with his heels—whereupon she started forward at a walk. A further prodding spurred her to a leisurely amble. But she showed no inclination whatever to display that airy speed which had earned her her name of Windrush—which was perhaps as well for Gort's dignity, for his seat felt by no means secure. He decided, therefore, that she was not yet strong enough to carry him with ease; and he dismounted, completely satisfied with his experiment. He had proved that the savage "Children of the Wind" could be tamed and ridden by man. The rest would follow.

To Borg, however, the experiment was most disappointing. Being much heavier than Gort, he was not yet allowed to even bestride the young mare. His impatient spirit could not brook further delay. He decided to try his luck with the stallion which, about a year and a half previously, had been captured by himself and Gort in another great tribal drive and brought home as a mate to Windrush's mother. The mare, all this while, had remained as savagely implacable as when she was caught. But the stallion, a mere two-year-old at the time of his capture, had proved more responsive to gentle treatment. The mare being now in foal again, the stallion was moved into Windrush's paddock, where, under her gentling example, he presently learned to submit,

more or less graciously, to a certain amount of handling. When, however, Borg slipped a halter upon his head, he went wild with fright and fury, and it was many days before he would suffer either Borg or Gort to approach him again.

As soon as he had grown tractable once more, and no longer resentful of the halter, Borg, who was ever self-confident, decided, against all Gort's dissuasions to try and ride him. But on one point Gort was inexorable. For the first attempt the stallion must be securely tethered, and on a short rope.

"If he lets you stay on his back," said Gort finally, "then I will loose him, and you can ride him. But we will see. You are my friend and brother; and I don't want Ee-la to become a widow."

The stallion was quietly munching a long wisp of grass, and flicking at the flies with his black tail, when Borg nimbly vaulted onto his back. Instantly the beast was converted into a raging demon. With a harsh squeal he sprang into the air, shaking himself convulsively to get rid of the strange burden. And get rid of it he did. For Borg, taken by surprise and not yet settled in his seat, was thrown at once and came down heavily on his side. In a flash the stallion turned and came at him, with bared teeth and pounding fore-hoofs. Checked short by his tether, he whipped round and lashed out venomously with his heels. But here he found his vengeance balked again; for Gort, having foreseen exactly what would happen, had dashed in and dragged the too hasty experimenter out of reach—just in time.

"You were right," said Borg, springing to his feet and rubbing his shoulder ruefully. "I was in too much of a hurry."

After this experience it was months before the outraged stallion would allow Borg to come near him. But against Gort, strangely enough, he seemed to bear no grudge.

IT was not until the following summer that Gort considered Windrush sufficiently mature for a real test. He had been riding her, gently and for a little while at a time, almost every day. She had learned to obey the guidance of the halter-reins and even of his voice; and he, for his part, had learned to feel secure in his seat. Borg, too, had gratified his ambition by riding the docile animal several times around the paddock, but it was evident that she found his great weight oppressive, and so he turned all his attention—patiently now, after Gort's manner—to winning the confidence and affection of the powerful stallion.

There came a day when the tribe was called to council. This was the occasion which Gort was waiting for.

He rode Windrush forth from the paddock. With heels and voice he urged her to a gallop. Then, waving his spear above his head, he rode at full speed down to the assembly, halted before the council seat, where the chief sat impassive upon his black lion-skin, and saluted.

"Hail, Chief," said he in a loud voice. "This is Windrush, whom I have tamed. The tribe are masters of the red wolf. Now they shall ride the Children of the Wind."

From all the assembly arose a roar of wonder and acclaim, led by Borg, who sat far back among the younger men. Dogs barked in sympathy. And the young mare, startled, began to prance and rear so that Gort for a moment had some difficulty in quieting her. The chief raised his hand, and the tumult died down.

"Gort has done—as Gort does always," said he. "He has worked a wonder for the tribe. He is indeed the son of Gröm, our great father."

But his voice, in spite of himself, was cold. Though his heart was great, he could not help a pang of envy as he surveyed the triumphant figure before him proudly mas-

tering the splendid beast which he bestrode. "Let Kran pardon me," said Gort, quick to understand, "if I leave the council for a moment. I go to bring a gift for the chief."

Without waiting for a reply, he wheeled and galloped off, leaving the council to its deliberations.

In a short time he returned leading by the halter a handsome yearling colt. He laid the reins in the hands of the chief, who grasped them with ill-concealed delight.

"This Son of the Wind," he cried, "will grow to be swifter and stronger than Wind-rush, and fit to bear the chief when he leads us against our enemies." Then, again saluting, he turned away and took his seat among the elders of the tribe.

"I thank Gort for his great gift," proclaimed Kran. "He is my father, and my mother, and my brother."

FROM this day onward there was no more talk of stagnation, or rusting in idleness, for the tribe. There was no more restlessness among the young men. In spite of

Mai-wân's jealous sneers, all were possessed with the craving to own and ride horses. Everywhere stockaded paddocks were built, after the fashion of those which stood beside the caves of Gort and Borg. Already many of the hunters, having observed Gort's skill in throwing a noosed rope and practiced the art in secret, were clever lassoers. Several great drives were organized; and under the guidance of Gort and Borg a number of horses were captured alive and brought home to the caves, though not without many casualties and failures. Most of the captives proved as incurably savage as Gort's first tameless mare, but some of these wild mares were in foal. Gort was tireless in his instructions and advice. And all the energies of the tribe were absorbed in learning to become the first breeders of horses. A new art had been evolved by man. A new servant, strong, swift and enduring, had been subdued to his hand. His life had been suddenly enriched. A new stride—and a mighty one—had been taken on the upward path toward civilization.

GHOSTS

(Continued from page 41)

A tired, staggering man, he lighted the old lamp in the cabin, then stood for a moment before beginning the task of preparing his meal, listening to the thrum of the rain upon the slab roof.

"I ought've seen that she got down all right," he thought dully. "Still, she wouldn't have wanted me. Just as she's never wanted me."

Then, the meal forgotten, he slumped into the one chair, grimy hands clasped, head deep between his shoulders. The unreality of it all had come to him now—that out of all the world, she should take the path that would lead to him.

"I must have looked different," he said aloud at last. Years in loneliness had given to Dick Lawton a second self; one talks easily to that other mentality in the high hills. "No wonder she sneered at me. I was going to be a millionaire by this time."

He laughed, shaking his head as if answering in derision the spoken query of a second person. Then, slow with fatigue, he rose and pawed for a long time in an old trunk. It brought forth the answer to the only letter he had written—from a hiding-place far at the bottom. Opening the three-year-old missive, he sought a paragraph with a muddy finger:

I am very glad that you have such a good opportunity for sudden wealth. However, if I must answer your question, you should know by this time, Dick, that I am not for sale, for a thousand, nor a hundred thousand, nor a million.

He stumbled to the trunk again and put the letter away. But as he straightened, his "ghosts," as he often called them, faced him, as though in victory—three photographs hanging upon the rough-chinked walls of his little cabin: photographs of the same girl, which smiled at him from frames totally out of place with their surroundings. They had come with him when, three fortuneless years before, a fortune seemingly waiting overnight,—he had made his way into the High Country.

"Oh, you'd have had something just as good to say, no matter what I might have told you," he meditated in monotone. He heated water, washed himself, then stood again silent, listening to the steady beat of an all-night rain. "Ought to get somebody up to help me. This'll raise that water up there—makes an awful lot of pressure, an inch does. If I had somebody to send down—can't leave things now with the water coming up all the time—"

A half-hour later he slumped to his bunk and began the unlacing of his boots. The rain still beat upon a sounding roof.

"Ought to get somebody up here," he repeated. "This is going to raise it a lot—there'll be heavy filling in the morning."

But in spite of the urgency the man paused in the temporary starlight when he rose, shortly after midnight, again to stare downward into the darkness of the valley.

"I wonder if it would make any difference?" he asked, answering his own question with a shake of the head. No, it wouldn't make any difference. Nothing he could ever do!

And for a moment the mountains faded. The cabin disappeared. The black softness of the aspen-lined hills, far across the valley, rolled away. Into the nothingness of retrospect, with its momentary cut-back into a cross-section of departed years, and Dick Lawton, seven years younger, with a hundred thousand dollars to his account which he never had earned—just as he had never earned the thousands which had been poured out to him in the years preceding. Dick Lawton, impetuous, self-centered because he had never been taught anything else; headstrong because a doting mother would have him no other way; able to buy everything he craved—except the one thing upon which he had not been able to find a price-mark.

Seven years, then six, then five—in the impetuosity of a rush which could not accomplish its object. There were others as impetuous as he; her smile had been for all of them. Four, and after that, the competition of millions—Lawton in those days had seen nothing else. He must have millions too.

He straightened and sighed. Something about the memory of those two weeks in which he had tried to hold his margins against a dropping market, the nights of anxious waking until the ticker should resume in the morning, the dullness of realization—it hurt even now, just as it had hurt a thousand times in these last three years when alone, struggling against odds, he had attempted the almost impossible, with funds all too meager, and with but two hands against the strength of the immutable hills. But the facts were inexorable; a fortune was gone, nor could a different motive return it. Gone—

And he a thing in grimy clothes, standing looking down into a dark valley toward the invisible cabin residence of the girl for whom it had departed. Not that she had willed it—even in his bitterest moments, Dick Lawton had never voiced the thought.

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"It wouldn't have done any good if I'd gotten it," he mused. "I—I'm just as glad I didn't get it. She wouldn't understand. Let her go back and say what she pleases. It won't make any difference. I'll never see 'em again. I don't want to see them again. I don't want to see her again!"

But as he said it, there was her face in the moon-silvered edge of a broken cloud, her voice in the whispering of the pines. He straightened, like a man striving to free himself of a galling load.

"Well, anyway, I can't see her—mustn't. It'll drag me back there if I do—I won't stick it out. And I've got to! I've got to!" he muttered as he skirted the edge of the lake. "I've got to—they're depending on it!"

SO the tram screeched again, and the dynamite sounded—in spite of the rain which resumed its downpour almost with his arrival at the dam. He knew the power of water, once released. He knew, too, what it would mean if ever the break came—first a trickling stream, then a tiny torrent, and after that a rush of an hour or so until, with crashing of rocks and thunder of tons upon tons of released power, this whole tremendous expanse of conservation would become as suddenly a giant of destruction, rushing downward in a wall of fury that would know no obstacle.

He closed his eyes against the imagined sight—careening houses, bawling cattle, men rushing here and there in the frantic futility of madness; greenery which faded beneath the rush of swirling yellow—and then the flood, spreading, spreading until all the world was a thing of glazed destruction—until that for which he had worked was gone, and those for whom he had labored were homeless, or merely floating faces in the flood he had loosed upon them! Lawton groaned, and cried aloud with the agony of it. Then with sudden frenzy he pushed the tram a dozen feet farther, and with boulders and sand and bits of rock began anew to lock the doors of a possible escape. At length fagged, gasping with a four-hour stretch of top-speed labor, he halted in the gray light of dawn.

"If I could only get help!" he groaned. "Jim Harris and his gang from down there in the Springs—if I could only get help. I can't make it alone!"

But his searching eyes, turning from ridge to trail, from the slate-gray flood of the far-stretching reservoir to the tiny jewel of the lake, could see only granite and trees and dripping rock-slides through the drifting mist—and the face of Lois. He rubbed a hand across his eyes, straightened.

"She'd help me—if she knew. If she'd come back!" But there was no one on the trail, no sight of a pretty form in close-fitting whipcord—only the black streak of a rain-soaked path leading along the lower lake. Lawton turned again to his labors.

The wind had dropped for a time, giving him a chance to make a tour of the embankment and to spot the weak areas, before the rise of the waves should hide them. There were a dozen; he marked them with stones, then hurried for the pit, and the reloading again and again of his tram.

For a crack had made its appearance far across the dam, where the earth joined the rocky hillside, necessitating pick and shovel as the man climbed high above the embankment and at a stretch of disintegrated granite, cut deep pockmarks so that the broken rock might travel downward in an unending stream. The wind had changed now, blowing straight from the top of the range, carrying more of chill, and changing the drizzle to stinging sleet. Whiter, whiter became the high world, with a splotch of black moving through it, first at the right of the spillway, then at the left, then hidden in the pit for a new supply

with which to fight the strengthening enemy—a splotch that was a man, muttering as he halted now and then, staring. Then suddenly he cried out.

For the white had lifted momentarily. Down there on the trail was something moving, and with an arm outstretched—

But the shoulders sagged again. It was only a gnarled tree, swaying in the wind, a gaunt branch extended as if pleading. Lawton groaned.

"I've got to have help! Got to get Harris. Go down tonight—make it by morning. If this rain'd let up—"

But when dusk came, he shook his head. The tons of granite which he had sent downward had settled—the crack over there at the hillside was leaking again. Once more, lost in the darkness, he crawled to his source of supply, to twist and writhe with the hurried movement of pick and then of shovel, while the granite scraped downward in a steady roar. Hours of heavy labor; then, as best he could in the darkness, he inspected the dam; the granite was high above the edge now—one more crisis had been averted. He straightened and started hurriedly across—there might be a chance to get down into the valley now. Two hours would be enough to reach her cabin—and tell her. She'd go—she'd—

But even as he thought of it, he shook his head. It was eighteen miles to the Springs, fifteen to the nearest telephone.

"And she just here from New York!" he gasped. "She couldn't make it."

Then the thought vanished entirely. He had halted, one foot raised from where it had splashed in running water. Kneeling in the darkness, he traced the stream, a ten-inch affair, going over the dam from a point a hundred feet west of the spillway. No chance now for a two-hour departure! Doggedly he seized his shovel, robbing the rear of the embankment for a temporary barrier.

"There!" he exclaimed at length. "Try to break through on me, will you? I stopped you—I stopped you!"

Then with a sudden resolve he was on his feet, throwing aside his tools and floundering along the trail down to his cabin.

LAWTON was dull of face and dazed of manner as he lighted the lamp and stood for a moment beside it. It had been a week now since the danger first had come, and almost incessant labor had sapped his strength. Dully he changed his clothing, loaded a gunnysack with provisions. He filled a small can with kerosene. "Funny," he mumbled. "Can't remember cleaning this place up. It's all swept an' everything." He stumbled to the door, then halted. The onslaught again was upon him; the slab roof once more was drumming with the downbeat of heavy rain. The man sighed, and for a long moment merely clumped about the room in anxious thought, heels dragging.

"This cabin'd stay—it's way above the lake," he decided at last. "At least they'd know—"

He fished a stubby pencil from a rat-proof can, and with it soggy pieces of paper. Slumped at the table, he scrawled with cramped fingers:

Folks in the Valley:

Can't get help. Dam's trying to go out. Doing my best. If it goes I'll go with it.

He forgot to sign it—in wondering where to put it. At last, with roofing-nails, he fastened it to the door. Then, with gunnysack and kerosene, he moved again to the trail. Ten minutes later oil-soaked logs were blazing at the right of the dam, while a slouched figure, eerie in the flickering light, came and went, bent and straightened, mucked and shoveled.

All through that night and the day which followed he labored on—for the rain still came pitilessly. The dam was now a thing of serried ridges, where tram after tram of earth had been dumped in a thin line of resistance against the force of the rising waters, now six inches higher than the old level of the embankment. A thin line which broke here, which broke there, only to be repaired, which caved and crumbled and sank away into the lapping fierceness of the enemy.

Sunshine at last, and the reservoir mocking him. Then the clouds once more, and the enemy creeping like some great gray beast as he fought doggedly against its advance. . . . Afternoon, and white mists which crept down from the tops of the mountains, obscuring everything save the vague form of the tram, the ground beneath his feet and the V-shaped things which showed again and again as he paced the embankment, marked the neediest points of attack and began anew his struggles. He slashed open a can of food with his hip-knife and gulped it from the tin, throwing small stones into the tram with his free hand, even as he ate. . . . Night, and the fire sprang into being again, while a staggering, reeling thing that had been a man screamed his anger at the lapping waves, and brushed feverishly at burning eyes.

"Why do you keep getting in front of me?" he shouted. "Get out of the way—get out of the way!"

BUT the figure danced before him—blurring and fading, then reappearing. The figure of a girl—as though she were there to mock him.

"Get away, you ghost!" he screamed again. Then he laughed, with the mental unbalance of nearly forty-eight hours of agony. "That's it—ghosts—ghosts. You've been my ghost for three years—I guess you've got a right to haunt me. But keep out of the way. This dam—it'll go out. I've got to hold it—with these!" He held out his swollen hands. "Look at 'em—hold it with these—"

Then, stumbling, dull again, hardly knowing what was about him, he turned again to his work, cursing the stones when they slipped from his grasp. . . . Midnight, and the fire becoming duller, casting strange reflections upon the slimy rocks, queer figures in the shadows of the gnarled trees. Lawton saw in them but one being—his Ghost, haunting him still, sneering at him and his work, taunting him.

"You don't understand it!" he mumbled. "I don't get anything out of it—get out of my way—get out of my way! Let me fix that spot where the water's going over—it'll be a foot wide in a minute!"

An hour more—the man dropped and rose again.

"Help me up," he begged of the thing that seemed ever beside him now. "That's it—help me up. Got to keep going—"

But he dropped again, and lay there until the lash of cold water across his face brought him dully to his senses. The fire burned lower—the man dragged himself thither and sought to throw a log upon it. It fell short and rolled into the water while he stood and cursed it—then with a sudden frenzy of strength he leaped with delirious fury to a pile of timbers and sent them crashing upon the blaze until the whole mountain-side was pink with reflected light.

On through the night—to the gray of dawn, and with the ghosts of the morning fog creeping upward from the valley. They chilled him; they crept about him; they hid the advance of his enemy until his blood-red eyes could no longer see with certainty the places of danger. He fell again—and again. He stumbled from the embankment, and slid deep down the side of

his new bulwark to the old face of the dam, to lie there, then slowly to flounder back to land again. He reeled to the fire, arms outstretched greedily for its warmth, lurched for a moment, then with a wide-flung motion of his arms, shouted anew his anger:

"Out of my way—out of my way! Can't you see you're blocking me?"

THE blurred thing moved, and came closer. It seemed to touch him.

"Dick!" he could hear the voice as from a great distance. "Dick—don't do that! Rest, wont you? They're coming."

"Rest?" It was the thing his mind had waited for, yet it inflamed him. "Rest! That's what you've been hovering around me for—you Ghost! Trying to drag me off this job—trying—"

"I haven't been hovering around. Oh, Dick, wont you please—you've been at this for two days, I know—I could tell—"

The man laughed, a delirious thing chuckling at his own imageries.

"Funny, isn't it," he exclaimed, "you helping me! You wanting me to rest! What do you want me to rest for?"

Again he brushed at his shoulders as though something had touched them.

"Don't you know why, Dick?"

He turned and swung a boulder to his shoulder, as easily as though it had been but a bit of wood. He ran to the lake with it, and dropped it—with a mighty splash into the murky waters.

"That'll stop it," he said drunkenly.

"That's where the leak's coming through. I need a lot of those—big boulders that I can throw in there—to weight it down—"

"Dick—Dick! You're beside yourself—"

"What's that, you Ghost?" he asked.

"Want me to rest? Want me to rest?"

Say,"—he lurched again, almost falling,—

"know why I can't rest? Know why I can't rest?" he asked again, thickly, like a man yielding to the influence of drink.

"I've got folks down there in the valley. Depending on me! Came out here three years ago. Going to get rich—storing this water and selling it in the heat of the summer for irrigation—so I could tell you some day that I'd made my million—and you couldn't have it! Then a crook down there found it out—crook found it out—see?" He waved a hand vaguely. "Understand that, Ghost? Got to understand. You're mine—do what I say—belong to me—not like her. She don't belong to me—but you do—her ghost. Been with me all the time, haven't you? Fair weather and foul, eh?"

He laughed, his delirious eyes squinting until they were only blood-red slits. "Fair weather an' foul. Like old song—"

He sang, weirdly, his racking voice off key. Again he rushed for the tram, missed it, slipped and fell.

"Help me up," he commanded as he had commanded a dozen times before, that night. "No, don't help me up! You with your whipcord! You with your friends back there in New York that don't know what dirt is! Don't help me up—"

Again he brushed at his left arm, as though some one were tugging at him. "Don't soil yourself—and your pretty clothes—"

"You don't understand, Dick," came a voice. "I'm not from New York. I'm from out here—in Colorado. Dad didn't leave what we thought, and Bert and I—"

"Yeh—Bert! Where is he, with his dress clothes and his high hat—at the opera, eh? That lake needs boulders in it—let go of me, let go of me! I've got to fill up this lake. Folks down there in the valley. That crook! Got hold of them. Told them there was going to be water right away. Sold that land and put them on it. Then there wasn't water. They went broke—I've been feeding 'em water ever since until they could get on their feet. It's their



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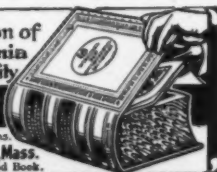
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water—not mine. Understand that, Ghost? No, you wouldn't understand that—you wouldn't understand anything but Fifth Avenue and that you hate me and—" Then he stopped again, laughing weirdly. "No, you don't hate me. You're her ghost. You do what I want you to do, not what she wants. You don't hate me; you love me—or you wouldn't be around me—love me, don't you?"

"I love you, Dick—love you." The misty thing faded and danced, came closer, then blurred. "I love you—I've known what you've been doing. We live down there—Bert and me. He's their doctor. He's working as hard as you—we've the last hundred acres on the left bank of the river—"

"Course you have. Good land—good land!" said the delirious man. "Got to save it." He turned to his empty tram, and running behind it, sent it far out upon the embankment. "Stolen it from me," he railed. "Boulders were in there—"

"Please—please! Dick, wont you rest? Don't you understand? They're on the way up—I went and got them; I saw what you wrote on the door—I'd gone there to sort of fix things up—you living there like a dog and working this way—I had thought you really hated me the other day. Then, on the way down, I'd looked in your cabin just from curiosity, and those pictures—Dick, wont you understand? I love you—I love you because you've come out here and worked and been the kind of man I wanted you to be—doing instead of wanting. Don't you understand? You brought us out here—you did it, Dick—that story about you in the paper, about how you were up here working so that those people down there could have good farms—and then I couldn't stand it any longer; I knew I wanted you; I made Bert bring me up here. . . . Dick—don't do that. You can't lift that—you can't—"

"Can't I, Ghost?" he asked, and swung a two-hundred-pound boulder upward, then staggered forth with it to a seepage point. "I'll get a dozen of them—a hundred—oh, so you're here too! Well, let's have them all. Let's—"

The face of her brother was dancing before him now, blurring and fading as hers had. Then the man glanced to one side.

"Ghosts!" he railed. "Ghosts everywhere. . . . Stay away from that dam! You, Harris—why weren't you here when I wanted you? Get away from there—get away from there, I tell you. That's my pit, my dam, my work."

He laughed wildly, striking out blindly, madly. Everywhere about him were vague, threatening figures which circled him, grasped at him.

"You're keeping me from that dam!" he screamed.

Then they caught him, these vague, indistinct things—bore him down, stifled him, overcame him.

THAT afternoon Lawton awoke in the bunk of his little cabin. The late sun was shining through a window. The tea-kettle was singing on the stove. At the door was a man with a coffee-pot in his hand, passing out steaming stimulant to a row of laborers, taking scant nourishment before their return to work. Slowly Lawton turned. He strove to raise a hand, only to find it prisoned in the warmth of a soft embrace. He looked up, his reddened eyes staring. Then with his free hand he touched her, the softness of her hair, the velvet hollow of her throat, her eyes.

"Real!" he murmured. "Real!"

She nodded. Then there was silence—except for the language of a smile, such as that which had come so long only from photographs, from Ghosts—that were Ghosts no longer.

HE KNEW WHAT HE WANTED

(Continued from page 65)

Sergei checked a nervous sob.
"Where is Chick-ah-goo?"
"Not far, only two days by train," said the mutual acquaintance.
"He has my guitar," said Sergei.
The group laughed.
"He has a guitar?" repeated the mutual acquaintance. "He has nothing. He sold the guitar."

"Sold my guitar?" whispered Sergei.
"Sold my guitar!"

"Whether it was yours or not I do not know, but a very fine guitar—"

"Mine, mine!" shouted Sergei. "To whom did he sell the guitar?"

"To Douna Palatova."

"Douna Palatova? She is here?"

"No, she went back to Russia last week."

Sergei started up, blinking.

"She went back to Russia?"

"She's a fool," sneered the mutual acquaintance. "She was making fine money, had a nice home, a room all to herself. Then she bought the guitar and went back to Russia. And she wouldn't say why."

A smile spread over Sergei's swarthy face.

"Listen, my friends," he shouted, "Douna Palatova loves me. There is a boat in the water near the city that one reaches on a railroad train, and there is a policeman whose sister is a hat-check girl here. That is the boat I want."

So they sought out the hat-check girl, and she wrote the name of the town. Then Sergei was conducted to the railroad station, and at the railroad station he met the policeman. He presented the blue beast with a note from his sister. And the blue beast put him into a motorboat. And the motorboat pulled up in front of the Baltic baron's schooner, which was sailing that night with officers and crew drunk with melancholy and a few bottles that had been spared them. At first the Baltic baron refused the deserter. And then in his rage he picked him up and threw him across the deck. Sergei slid down to the forecabin and endeavored to make himself as inconspicuous as possible.

FOUR weeks more of drunken violence and a pitching sea. Then Libau. Then the four days' ride on the slowest of the passenger trains. Then the forest.

This time there were only twenty odd bullets fired at him from the Lettish guards, and another twenty from the Russian. He met no wolves. A day's walk from the frontier he took a train. I tell this part of the tale briefly, for such is its relative importance to Sergei.

Back in Moscow. At the railroad station he enraged the cab drivers by rejecting one after another of them until he found one man with a plaid blanket. Sergei liked plaid. He stepped in. He closed his eyes and smiled. Then the horse stopped.

The cross-eyed soprano shrieked as she saw him.

"Do you know Douna Palatova is here?" she panted.

"Why shouldn't she be here?" he demanded. "Is she not a free woman? Have you a soul? Answer that."

He marched up the steps to Douna Palatova's room. She was singing.

He knocked and entered.

"Douna Palatova," he said, "you have my guitar! Douna Palatova, I love you!"

That night, Sergei sat on the doorstep and plucked at the magical strings of his guitar. Douna, stretched at his feet, looked up at him adoringly and their eyes met.

Sergei took a deep breath and sang:

"If only I were dead!"

He was very happy.

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a day too soon"**

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4

Thrilling Evenings

FIRST EVENING

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THIRD EVENING

Many true Blue Book Magazine readers will turn first of all to Clarence Herbert New's incomparable "Free Lances in Diplomacy;" and "The Herriott Gas," in the February number, is one of the most exciting of all the famous series. For contrast in mood and theme read next John Weaver's delightful race-track story "Lookin' Out the Window," then Morgan Burke's weird sea-story "The Soul Saver," followed perhaps by Louis Henocho's "An Eastern Western" and Courtney Ryley Cooper's tale of the untamed inventor Leonidas Twigg in "His First False Step."

SECOND EVENING

Start off with a splendid adventure in the wilderness of the great Northwest, "Spruce Shadows," a stirring chronicle of red-blooded drama by William Byron Mowery. Follow it in the company of that grand old philosopher and humorist Opie Read, in his lively story of the oil-fields "What Would You Have Done?" And top off an evening well spent with Beatrice Grimshaw's eerily fascinating tale of a strange South Seas treasure-quest, "The Singing Ghost," and Jack Rohan's brief and really unusual "The Voronoff Mystery."

FOURTH EVENING

The celebrated Buried Alive Club will give you some fine thrills to begin your evening right, in Frank Parker Stockbridge's "Echoes." Then for variety try the inimitable Bertram Atkey's latest tale of the Easy Street Experts—two amiable rascallions who live by their wits; Warren Hastings Miller's brilliant tale of a Malay court "The Sunggei Tin Mine" would come in nicely now; and then the five prize true stories of Real Experience by our readers will help you to realize that life is decidedly well worth living for readers of The Blue Book Magazine.

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THE HYBRID

It would mean a new existence, an uncongenial milieu, under codes alien and incomprehensible to him. So his misgivings ran, even as all the while he became more ashamed of them, adjudged himself a sorry cad—in fine, a coward and prude.

For three days he remained away. On the fourth, Bianca denied herself with the plea of a headache. A week passed before he saw her again.

IT was one of those freakish summer evenings of a chill autumnal bleakness, with a drizzle and dull rumbling in foretoken of a thunderstorm.

He found a tiny cannel-coal fire lighted in Bianca's living-room, a table spread before it, while from over the hearth, newly framed, eerily aglow, her mother's face smiled down.

And for all a new devil-may-care bravado, he caught at Bianca's very entrance the effect of a definite withdrawal to the barrier of her early aloofness. She laughed more loudly, talked more, appeared to have matured and hardened.

"A treat for you, tonight, Neil—*escaloppes de foie gras à la Russe*, a favorite dish of Beau McAllister's, I've heard."

He saw that for the first time more than one wine was being served, that she drained a glass very quickly, and immediately beckoned the waitress to refill it.

Restlessly her fingers drummed the table. She took up a fork, laid it down again.

"I believe I sha'n't stay here much longer, Neil. I've a hankering to swim a lot, and ride horseback a lot, and drink, and dance, and laugh, and meet lots and lots of people. Dull folk, homely folk, horrid folk—it makes no difference! It's high time to mingle a bit."

"I'll miss you, Bianca."

He saw her lips curl in response to the sepulchral note in his voice.

"It's been lovely here, Bianca."

"Hasn't it, though?" There was a slight movement of one shoulder, too politely indefinite for a shrug. Then her nostrils quivered as the storm's first lightning-flash shot through the room.

"Oh! It's coming, Neil! I've been waiting all day for it. Do you thrill to them—to thunderstorms—as I do? I love them at sea, and when they come up over mountain-tops! I love them to be deafening, blinding—"

"Eat, Bianca. Your dinner is delicious."

HER rejoinder came in a peal of laughter—its shrillness startled him. She shrugged unmistakably now, drank a third glass of wine, buttered a bit of bread, and in the act of lifting it to her lips, whirled suddenly from her chair, and was standing at full height, her hands clasped behind her neck, looking up at the portrait of her mother.

"Neil, you fool, why do you persist in thinking of my mother as the shady queen of some shady half-world?"

"Bianca, dear, what a crazy misconception—"

"She wasn't notorious; she was renowned."

"Undeniably, child—"

"She was an exquisite little Lady Lothario,"—her voice had mounted to drown his interruptions,—"with a streak of the pure blood royal in her veins."

"But, Bianca—"

"Yes, and if her father happened to be a janitor, as beyond a doubt her father was, why, he must have been a janitor with a song in his soul to produce anything so delicate and merry and lovely as my mother. . . . I've seen statesmen, and writers, and great artists hanging upon my mother's words. There was nothing ugly in their eyes, either, but rather that wistfulness

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page 45)

you saw in your father's eyes when he looked at the picture here."

She wheeled quickly toward him. He saw that her lips had gone quite gray.

"What do you know about it, anyway? Why do you presume to judge? Do you know Vienna—Vienna before the war? One dances in Vienna, Neil, dances the night out, and the dawn in. And there are roses, and perfumes, and confetti, and laughter, and love! Life's a masque in Vienna, a pagan pleasure-chase! And my mother queened it, with a real majesty."

A great tear welled over her lashes, rolled unheeded down her cheek.

"Laugh if you like, but it was much the same sort of majesty my father had when I found him that morning among his tulips, big and gaunt and sick, looking out like a dying monarch over the prim buildings of that prim little theological seminary of his. Laugh if you like; for it's laughable—isn't it?—that I thought to hearten him with the news of his Bianca's calling in that plaintive little croon for her Sammee! The same—ah!"

A lightning-flash streamed through the room. Even as a thunder-crack topped it, she was running out onto the little balcony. The rain came beating in angry sheets now, over a world suddenly gone black and full of a ghoulish howling of high winds, interspersed by flares and splintering crashes. He hurried to her side, tried to draw her to a more secure shelter. But she shook herself free of him, laughed out into the storm.

"I'm a mongrel, Neil, and glory in my shame. I'm a hybrid!"

AT her words, he started, hitting upon the intrinsic reason for her aloneness and aloofness and pathetic pariahdom. Not the mere irregularity of her birth, but rather that blend and clash of alien temperaments, of warring instincts, of race-traditions utterly at variance.

"Hybrid, Neil, hybrid! The word's derived from the Greek. It means insult and outrage. I'm an insult and an outrage, an insult and an outrage, an insult and an out—"

A thunderclap drowned the words which, shouted though they were, scarce reached him through the din. He came close to her, heartsick at the laughing, fevered agony which she made no attempt now to cover.

"An insult and outrage—"

"Bianca dear—" It was awkward, in an emotional crux, to be forced to bellow through a clamor. "There's sunlight ahead, if only—"

"You sound like the moral maxims in a child's first reader!"

She wrenched her hand free, held him off with a gesture of repugnance, while a brilliant stream from the skies showed him the piteous distraughtness in her eyes as they darted in all directions as if in search of refuge.

A low cry escaped her. As it died down, the wind's wail took up its cadences, wrought them into a wild shrill crescendo.

Again he approached her, lost her in the impenetrable gloom, groped blindly—and with the next white flare caught the glitter of crystal sequins a few yards away. She was running, as if toward a refuge, out into the very heart of the storm.

The rain and wind gusts lashed him into a blinding rage. He gripped her furiously by the shoulders when, in the entrance of a summerhouse at the farther end of the roof, at last he overtook her.

Another thunderbolt crashed mightily from the skies. There followed, for what seemed the merest shred of a second, a sensation of total blankness. From a vast distance he

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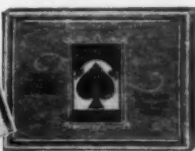
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thought to catch a soft glad cry. Then he was amazed to find his fingers snarled in her loosened hair. He was kissing Bianca, kissing the satin smoothness of throat and shoulder, meeting lips upturned eagerly to his. He felt the tremor and flex of taut muscles going suddenly slack within the span of his arm.

And when the next forked flash overspread them with its weird glow, he saw her as he had seen her once before—lips parted, eyelids fluttering, all the proud golden loveliness of her, rapt and immobile in his arms.

"Bianca, sweet—"

Through an amazing swirl of confusion and delight, he recognized the need of a swift decision and point-blank declaration. "I love you, Bianca, and you'll marry me, won't you? I'll try mightily to make you happy, dear. And we'll go ever so far away from all things that confuse and hurt you. I'll close up my affairs. We'll travel. The Riviera, Andalusia. . . . Years and years of them ahead of us—"

"No!"

The single syllable seemed to hurl itself at him with the impact of a verdict from which there was no appeal.

And his arms all at once were empty. The next lightning-flash revealed her a short distance from him, a numb blankness on her face, regarding him as if in wonderment at some gross outrage of decency of which he was guilty.

She turned, walked back through the storm slowly and with that same air of apathy and unconcern, paused, when they had returned to the fireplace, to wring out the fallen masses of rain-drenched hair.

"Go, now."

Her voice was tranquil, her eyes averted as if in fastidious shrinking from something that crawled.

And in a mounting surge of rage and bewilderment, he left her.

OVERWROUGHT and angry, Braith had slumped into an armchair upon his return to his rooms, and fell almost immediately into a heavy sleep of exhaustion. He awoke with a sort of jolt, at the rattle of milk-carts, at once aroused to a sleepy alertness.

He felt a need for haste, as if there were a train to be caught, or some such exigency at hand. Hurriedly he bathed and shaved. Not until he was adjusting his tie did it occur to him that this feeling of urgency had something to do with Bianca. He must see Bianca—see her at once.

He stepped out into a dank grayness that gave every chance passer-by the look of a night prowler, and a few minutes later gave his name to a night attendant who eyed him askance, took his tip grudgingly.

For a moment, while the boy spoke over the house telephone, Braith felt a panicky misgiving. Perhaps Bianca would not receive him. But even as the thought struck him, the grilled door of the elevator cage was opening. . . .

Wrapped to the chin in a dressing-gown, she was waiting in the little outer hall, unruffled, but very pale. Her hair was coiled smoothly. Its formal arrangement gave a ludicrous stamp of correctness, somehow, to the meeting.

Without a word she led the way to where a few hours before, the little fire had blazed so merrily. The ash-strewn hearth increased an effect of cheerlessness.

"I had to come, Bianca—"

He stopped short, for her lips were moving as if, about to speak, she was pausing in perplexity to formulate the phrases. After a little, she nodded sharply.

"Listen to me, Neil—"

Through that deadened look on her face, he saw that she was smiling up at him, and something inexpressibly poignant sounded in the low, steady voice.

"I love you, Neil, dearly. And if you still wish it, why, I believe it will be very delightful with you in those foreign capitals and carnival spots you spoke of. I'll go, and gladly—but not as your wife, Neil."

A gesture checked his interruption.

"You'll have to bear with me in the beginning, perhaps. I'm not sure I have the knack for that sort of thing. I may have to acquire it. I'll try to be ardent, though, in the approved manner, and amiable, and sleekly groomed—"

"Preposterous!"

A new, crisp note cut like a whip upon his protestations. "Under these conditions, I'll go. But as for making a tipsy love-speech out of marriage—why, I couldn't quite stomach that, Neil."

A long silence, then; the light deepened, brightened, over the roof-tops as he pondered this new knot in the snarl, at a loss for words to express his chagrin and perplexity. . . .

"Look at me, Neil—"

He was surprised to see on her face no cold disapproval, but rather a gentle anxiety, an abashed and apologetic look. She stepped a little closer, smiling a sort of entreaty up at him.

"Be gracious, Neil, and don't interrupt. I must make things clear. . . . You see, I suppose it all started with a mite of a girl who held her head high, awfully high, and who felt from the beginning a sense of being set a little apart from things. She was a proud, presumptuous little girl. . . . When her hair still hung in curls, she grasped quite clearly just what it was that set her father and mother apart from other fathers and mothers. It never occurred to her to feel any stigma. Their story had all the lilt of a mighty love-poem to her. But that's neither here nor there."

She sighed, crossed the room, and looked out into the dawn that was rising from the east in faint vari-hued radiance, in a mist and shimmer that seemed to enfold and withdraw her, actually to deprive her of substantiality, to make of her a very part of the mist and shimmer and radiance. When at length she spoke, the words came in a sound strangely thin and far-off, like a long sigh of regret put into articulate phrases.

"Try to understand: Scurry and whirl, scurry and whirl—a long, lonely rushing about the world with nothing permanent, nothing solid. . . . A girl who held her head absurdly high, and figured things out absurdly in the grand manner. . . . Scurry and whirl! Perhaps it was natural, that that girl began to set a tremendous value upon—upon enduring things, do you see?—ever-so-old houses, ancient families, proved gentlefolk, things that had stood for centuries and centuries, through generations upon generations—do you see? She wanted the laughter and music and fragrance her mother loved, but with a background, and a granite foundation. On the other hand, she felt a certain allegiance to her forefathers' God, only her God was a gracious and glorious God who—who never roared like the Puritans' God. . . . And all through that lonely scurrying, there was a sense of waiting for something ever so glorious. . . . Dreams came. . . . Then you came." Her voice became even fainter when, after a second, she went on:

"All of a sudden you came. And you were quite correctly punctilious about the decencies, and a point-blank proposal of marriage. But don't you see, dear, in order to include me in your scheme of things, you found it necessary once and for all to thrust behind you all the solid, sacred things you prized. It came—rather as a shock—to realize that—because—because that's not what I wanted, you see."

She outstretched her hands, so tightly clenched that the knuckles shone white.

"Not what I wanted! Not what I've been waiting for—ever so long, ever since a mite of a girl began to thrust her chin up into the air. . . . Not the something glorious I saw ahead."

Her voice had mounted. It rang clarion clear, yet oddly remote, as if from a distance it were pronouncing a last proud ultimatum.

"I wanted a solemn and stately alliance, Neil, a forever-and-ever alliance! I wanted pride in me to shine on my husband's face, yes—even more brightly than tenderness. And by the grace of a glorious God, I wanted a home, Neil, in the old patrician sense, where dead generations put a sort of seal, and generations to come a sort of halo. . . . I wanted to breed a race of brave boys, and bright-eyed girls who'd hold their heads high—awfully high! I wanted to live richly, love mightily—and all to the glory of a gracious God!"

Unclenching her hands, quite abruptly she turned them, palm up, to him. And in that dazzling effect of dematerialization, only the hands now appeared to retain their corporeality. Livid against the satin smoothness of the palms, were the deep dents which her fingernails had cut there.

HE wanted terribly to go to her, to take her in his arms and kiss the hurt and heartache away; but a sense of futility and shame kept him rooted at the fireside. Too late for assurances. He felt a hot moisture in his eyes.

"Dear—my ever so dear—" Again her voice dropped to a thin whisper. "That afternoon a week ago—do you remember? For a little moment then, there was pride in your eyes when you looked at me. There were tears in your eyes. The first time I'd seen tears in a man's eyes. Holy things, tears, when they shine in a man's eyes. For the first time in my life I felt very humble—sort of—sort of pedestaled, yet humble. . . . This humility—I can't explain it, Neil. But I believe thousands of years ago some woman saw that look in some man's eyes, and it was she who first thought of a God of love who created man in his own image! . . . You looked—you looked—"

She stopped short, trembled. He saw her start, brush her hand across her eyes, saw that, half-blinded by tears, she was peering at him intently. He saw the stony look melt from her face into incredulity that merged slowly into amazement, into a joy that brought the rose tints in a surge to her cheeks.

"You looked—"

The long hands outstretched themselves. She swayed toward him.

"Just as you are looking at me now, dear! Just as you are looking at me now!"

AND in a trice all was well again, the snarl unraveled, the future clear. That which a minute ago had been only a remote shimmering shaft, became in his arms intensely alive, a woman warm and tender-eyed, whose heart pounded stormily against his. "Home at last, Neil! Here in your arms, it's home."

For a long moment, then, through a great stillness, they stood immobile. He felt strangely tranquil, as if there were no need for mere words, as if in the solemn joy and still serenity of this sunrise, protestations and promises could be only idle, paltry things, as if difficulties and ugliness were swept away, and the future blithely hallowed by this pageant rising from the horizon in Bianca's own colors, a vast, soft deluge of rose and gold.

Then, with an incongruity which struck him as quite in order, he found himself wondering whether the caretaker had kept up the dahlia beds he remembered his mother planting in West Virginia—was it thirty years ago?

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